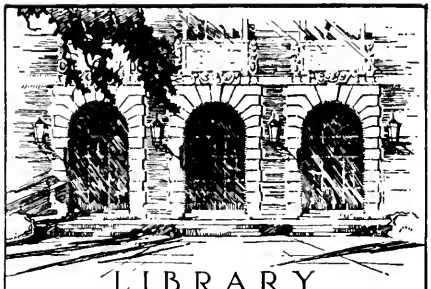


LIBRARY
OF THE
UNIVERSITY
OF ILLINOIS

823
F228d
v.2

THE DUCHESS

OF

ROSEMARY LANE.

A Novel.

BY

B. L. FARJEON,

AUTHOR OF

'GRIF;" "BLADE-O'-GRASS;" "JOSHUA MARVEL;" "AT THE SIGN OF THE SILVER FLAGON;" "AN ISLAND PEARL;" "SHADOWS ON THE SNOW," ETC.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

TINSLEY BROTHERS, 8, CATHERINE ST., STRAND.

1876.

[*All rights of Translation and Reproduction are Reserved.*]

PRINTED BY TAYOR AND CO.,
LITTLE QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS.

823
F228d
v.2

CONTENTS.

PART THE FIRST.--THE CHILD

(*Continued.*)

CHAP.		PAGE
X.	INTRODUCING SETH DUMBRICK, THE COBBLER	1
XI.	SALLY HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT	31
XII.	THE PHILOSOPHY OF IT	61
XIII.	SALLY HAS A PARTY	77
XIV.	SETH DUMBRICK MAKES A BARGAIN WITH THE LOVELY LAD	107
XV.	THE DUCHESS BEGINS TO GIVE TROUBLE	143
XVI.	SETH DUMBRICK BECOMES IMAGINATIVE	178
XVII.	A GROUP OF TITTLE TATTLERS	196
XVIII.	AN ADVENTURE AT SPRINGFIELD	209
XIX.	WHAT YOU DON'T GET IS PROFIT	238
XX.	FROM CHILDHOOD TO WOMANHOOD	262

Part the First.

(*Continued.*)

THE CHILD.

THE
DUCHESS OF ROSEMARY LANE.

CHAPTER X.

INTRODUCING SETH DUMBRICK, THE COBBLER.

Sally, walking about the streets the next morning, with her baby in her arms, was aware that a critical change in her prospects was impending, which threatened to separate her and the child who was now part of her life; and as far as such a mite as she can be said to determine, she resolved that such a separation should never take place.

How to prevent the catastrophe? This was the problem which was vexing Sally's

mind. The practical solutions which occurred to her were to hide, or to run away. She adopted the latter, and set off walking at as good a pace as her little legs could achieve. But Sally was not strong, and the child she carried was no light weight for one of her tender years to bear, and before she had extricated herself from the labyrinth of courts, alleys, and narrow streets which intersected Rosemary Lane she was exhausted. Leaning against the wall, she looked up to the sky with a sad and weary face. She had never forgotten the beautiful dream she had dreamt on the night of her brother's return, and it now recurred to her, bringing with it a dim hope that something wondrous might happen to aid her in her difficulty. If she had been acquainted with the history of Jack and his Beanstalk, she would have audibly wished for a tree—up which she could climb into a kinder land than Rosemary Lane. But no miracle brought light to Sally's troubled soul, and

her lofty aspirations found vent only in the words,

"Oh, dear! I am tired and hungry, and I think I'll go back. Eh, baby?"

"Iss," baby replied, which it may be remarked is the first word spoken in this story by its heroine.

Fortified by baby's acquiescence, Sally retraced her steps, the baby becoming heavier every moment. So heavy at length, that Sally paused to rest, and put the baby down on a doorstep, to relieve her tired arms. As she stooped, her eyes fell on an upturned face, the sudden revelation of which caused the colour to rush into Sally's white cheeks, and her heart to beat violently.

She had halted immediately before a cobbler's stall, and the face she saw as she set the baby down was that of Seth Dumbrick, the cobbler—no other, indeed, than the cobbler who in Sally's dream had appeared to her in the clouds, mending boots

and shoes for the angels. Here was the realisation of Sally's dim hope. Fancies of grand processions and magic trees and angels in the clouds thronged her mind, revolving around two central figures—the sweet figure of her beautiful child, and the strange one of this queer-looking cobbler whose chin had not met razor's edge for a week.

Seth Dumbrick, observing Sally's agitation, and also attracted by the circumstance of a pretty little child lying immediately before his stall, paused in his work, and spoke to Sally. She did not hear the words, but the tone of the man was kind, and that was sufficient to give colour to her hope.

"O Mr. Dumbrick," she exclaimed, pressing her hands to her breast, and gazing upon the cobbler with eyes open to their fullest extent. "It was you I dreamt of—it was you!"

"Ah, Sally," was Seth Dumbrick's calm comment, "it was me you dreamt of, eh? What sort of a dream?"

"Oh," cried Sally, "so good—so beautiful!"

"Ah," he observed, with a slight flash of humour in his great grey eyes, "was I dressed in silk stockings and a gold-laced hat?"

"Better than that—better than that!" cried Sally eagerly.

Some element of unlooked-for earnestness in Sally's manner attracted the man still closer to her.

"Tell us the dream," said he.

Sally gave him a practical reply. "I am *so* tired, and *so* hungry! And so's my baby."

Seth's eyes wandered to the baby, who was staring at him solemnly. Seth started back, without in the slightest degree disturbing the fixed solemnity of the baby's gaze.

"Yours?" gravely questioned Seth of Sally.

"Mine," as gravely answered Sally, with an emphatic nod.

A smile passed over the cobbler's lips. His stall was curiously built in front of a flight of steps leading down to a cellar, in which he lived, and as he sat at work on his platform, his face was almost on a level with the pavement. Now, as Sally made reference to her tired and hungry condition, she peered into this cellar. It was dark and safe. If she and her baby could hide there, no one in the world would be able to separate them.

"May I come in?" she begged.

"Come along," said Seth.

There was room on the platform for the children, and Sally, with her baby, joyfully squeezed in, and nestled in the corner, where they could see and be seen by the cobbler, but were almost quite hidden from the passers-by in the street. Seth Dumbrick then, reaching out his hand, opened a little cupboard on his right, and taking from it a loaf of bread, cut two thick slices, over which he spread a careful layer of dripping from

a yellow basin. Sprinkling these liberally with salt, he gave them to the children, and proceeded with his work while they ate.

Every movement he made was watched with admiration by Sally, and the disclosure of the cupboard containing food was to her something almost magical.

Seth Dumbrick was a character in the neighbourhood. A silent, observant man, with no particular vice except those of being a bachelor and not being partial to women folk, he worked in his stall from morning till night, and his prices were so reasonable and his work so good that he was never allowed to be idle. Not a person in Rosemary Lane was on visiting terms with him, and the children, as they passed and repassed, were in the habit of casting longing looks into the dark shadows of the cellar which had never yet received a guest, and which was popularly supposed to contain rare and precious deposits. The circum-

stance of his having been seen at various times carrying bottles and jars with living creatures in them imparted an additional interest to his habitation. He was never seen in a public-house or a place of worship. There was once a story current of his having been visited by a Clergyman who was concerned about Seth Dumbrick's soul. The story ran that the Clergyman used very strong persuasion to induce Seth to come to church, and that Seth flatly refused, and justified his refusal. Thereupon they became entangled in tough argument, the one standing outside in the street, flushed and excited, the other sitting calmly on his stool, hammering away at a shoe as the knotty points were discussed; and it was understood that Seth Dumbrick had not the worst of the argument. In a general way the female residents in Rosemary Lane had long ago decided that Seth had been crossed in love, and that this was the reason of his living the life of a hermit. Seth never con-

tradicted this rumour, and it grew to be believed in.

Everything in Seth Dumbrick's face was on a grand scale; there was not a mean feature in it. His lips were full and powerful, his nose was large and of a good shape, his great grey eyes had in them a light and depth which were not easily fathomed, and but for his forehead, which hung over his eyebrows like a precipice, he would have been a well-looking man. But this forehead was of so monstrous a bulk that it engrossed the attention of the observer, and except to those with keen and penetrative insight, destroyed all harmony of feature in the face of the man. His flesh was not over clean; his hands were as hard as horn; he had a week's bristles on his chin, and an old red nightcap on his head.

Before the children had finished their slices of bread-and-dripping, Seth, bending forward, took Sally's boots from her feet, and examined them. They were in sad

need of repair, and without a word, Seth began to patch and hammer away at them. Sally's eyes glistened with grateful pleasure.

"And now about that dream of your'n, Sally," said Seth Dumbrick, as Sally, after partaking of the last mouthful of bread, wiped her lips with her hand. "I didn't have a gold-laced hat and silk stockings on?"

"Oh, no," replied Sally, screwing up her lips.

"What did I have on, then?"

"Nothing."

Seth stared and laughed.

"Nothing."

"Only what you've got on now," said Sally.

"That's better," observed Seth, "and properer."

"And you was setting on a stool, mending shoes—as you're doing now."

"Well, that's not much of a dream, Sally. You could dream that dream over

again this minute, with your eyes wide open."

"No, I couldn't—no, I couldn't!" protested Sally, with a vigorous shake of her head. "You don't know!"

"Well, go on; I was setting here mending shoes——"

"No, no," interrupted Sally, "you wasn't setting here."

"Where, then?"

"There!" said Sally, pointing with her finger upwards to the sky.

"There!" echoed Seth, with a startled look, following the line of Sally's finger.

"And angels was flying all about you, and you was mending their shoes."

And then Sally related the whole of her dream as circumstantially as it was in her power to do. The narration occupied some time, and at its conclusion Sally's face was red with excitement, and an expression of interest was in Seth Dumbrick's features.

"And I was putting a pair of shining

slippers on the feet of this little thing," he said, taking the baby in his arms. "I didn't know you had a little sister, Sal."

"I ain't got none; she ain't my sister—she's my baby."

Seth Dumbrick, holding himself aloof from his neighbours, and not being given to idle chatterings, knew none of the particulars of the child's introduction to Rosemary Lane, and he now learnt them for the first time from Sally's lips.

"A foundling she is," he said, looking with interest upon the child. "She's a beauty, Sally."

"She's the beautifulest that ever was."

"That's putting it strong, but she *is* a pretty little creature. Poor little castaway!"

"She wasn't dressed like this when she first come," said Sally.

"No! How, then?"

"She had nice things, better than I ever seed."

"What's become of 'em?"

"Pawnbroker's," tersely replied Sally.

"Ah! and you've no idea who or where the pretty little creature's mother is?"

"She never had a mother."

"That's new, but not quite according to nature, Sally. A mother she must have had."

"No; she had a ma, not a mother. I knew she wasn't like us the first moment I ever see her. That was the night brother Ned come home, and me and baby went to bed together. Then I dreamed that beautiful dream of you and the angels. Wasn't it a beautiful dream?"

"It was a fine dream, Sally, a rare fine dream! Angels! and Seth Dumbrick a-working for 'em! that's the finest part of it. Seth Dumbrick setting in the sky, with angels a-begging of him to mend their shoes! And I'll do it too—when I get there. I'll set up as a cobbler in the clouds, and 'll make my fortune. Ha, ha, ha! Sally,

go on dreaming like that, and something 'll come of it."

"What 'll come of it?" asked literal Sally.

Seth Dumbrick rubbed his chin with his horny hand. The bristles were so strong, and his hand was so hard, that the action produced a rasping sound, such as the rubbing of sand-paper produces.

"There was a woman once, and her name was Southcott—Joanna Southcott it was. Now she was a poor woman, too, as you'll be."

Sally nodded. It cannot with truth be said that she had ever bestowed the slightest thought upon the matter, but if she had made it the subject of the most serious contemplation she could have had no other expectation than that of a certainty she would be a poor woman all her life.

"She had dreams, and prophesied. *She* dreamt of angels and the devil, and had a fight with the devil."

"Did she run away from him, and did he run after her?" inquired Sally, almost breathless with excitement, for in her mind at that moment the devil stood for the new tenant who, in her own dream, had tried to destroy her treasure-baby.

"That's not told," answered Seth Dumbrick.

"But she beat him!" suggested Sally, with her little hands tightly clasped.

"She beat him bad, did Joanna. My mother—she was a Devonshire woman, Sal, like Joanna—believed in her, and so did a heap of others. And now I come to think of it," said Seth, with a musing glance at the pretty child lying on his leather apron, "there's something strange in Joanna Southcott's name coming into my head in this way. For, you see, Sal, when Joanna was an old woman, she gave out that she was going to be brought to bed with a Prince of Peace; but she never was, more's the pity, for that's the very Prince the world

wants, and never yet's been able to get. She used to go into trances, used Joanna, and prophecy."

"Tell me," said Sally.

"About 'em? Well, there was so many of 'em. She was always at it."

"What's trances?" asked Sally, with feverish anxiety; "and what's prophecy?"

"Well, Joanna 'd be setting as you're a-setting now, when all at once she'd go off —fall back or forward like, insensible. That 'd be a trance. Then she'd dream something. Then she'd come to, and tell what she dreamt. That 'd be a prophecy."

"*I* do that!" cried Sally, in a fever of excitement. "*I* fall back and faint dead away—dead away! For a long time. And I don't know nothing that goes on all the time. Oh, my! But I ain't begun to prophecy yet, that I knows on. Tell me, what *is* prophecy?"

"Something that comes true, or is likely to come true. That's prophecy. Now,

here and there your dream's a good deal like some of Joanna's dreams. She was a prophetess; my mother had some of her writings. Fine writings, Sal, promising fine things. You look out, Sally. You keep on dreaming, and fainting dead away, and some day perhaps you'll prophesy."

Sally nodded. Her eyes were full of fire, her little lips were parted in wonder, and in her childish mind strange and yearning hopes and cunning designs were beginning to stir.

"That dream of your'n," proceeded Seth Dumbrick, in all earnestness, "might signify something. There's a mighty deal in it to an understanding mind. If you was older than you are, Sally, I'd asked you to commence and prophesy."

Sally answered by another nod. Indeed, fascinated by the earnestness of the speaker, no less than by the mystery which seemed hidden in his words, Sally's head oscillated up and down with regular motion, following

with ready acquiescence the current of Seth Dumbrick's utterances.

"Other people's had dreams," said Seth Dumbrick, "that signified something, and led to something. There was Maria Marten. You know about her."

Sally, who had seen the tragedy of *Maria Marten, or the Murder at the Red Barn*, enacted at a penny show, replied eagerly, "I've seed her! and I've seed the pickaxe —and the grave—and the blood!"

"That all come of a dream. A mole-catcher her father was, and she was a fine young woman. The girl goes away from home one fine day, dressed up in man's clothes. She's got a sweetheart, and she's going to meet him to be married. But instead of taking her to church her sweetheart takes her to the Red Barn, and shoots her. Now it was a year afterwards that Maria appears to her mother in a dream—"

"Yes, yes!" cried Sally. "Dressed in a white bedgownd. She was at the show."

"—and says that she's murdered, and buried in the Red Barn. Well, the mother tells her dream, and the people laugh at her. But the ghost comes to her a second time the next night, and a third time the next, and then the mother won't be denied. They go to the Red Barn, and there they find Maria, done up in a sack, and buried under the floor. Every word of it is as true as true can be. Now," said Seth, graciously and condescendingly, as though he were about to present Sally with a large piece of plum-cake, "I'll tell you something that I wouldn't tell to everybody. I saw that man hung."

Sally gazed at him with eyes dilated to their fullest extent. Seth Dumbrick, gratified at this exhibition of interest, moistened his thumb.

"I was there, and saw him hung. Corder his name was, and it's—ah, it's twenty odd year ago. I was a young man then, and I went to all the executions."

"Why?" inquired Sally, without any special reason for asking; adding as an afterthought, "Was they nice?"

Seth Dumbrick rasped his bristly chin again with his horny hands.

"Can't exactly say why," he honestly answered. "They wasn't particularly nice, but there was a relish in 'em. I've seen seven men in a string. I can see 'em now, all of a row."

Staring into space upon this gloomy imagining, Seth Dumbrick paused a sufficient time to see the black caps drawn over the faces of the doomed men, and the ropes adjusted. Which being done, and the men disposed of, he resumed the former topic.

"Then there was other dreams. Here's one. Two men work in a brewery. One kills the other, and heaves the body into the fire under the boiling vat, where it's burned into smoke and ashes. No one knows what's been done, and the story runs that the murdered man's been drowned.

The murderer goes to another town, and lives there. Now, then. A matter of seven years afterwards the murderer comes back again, and gets work immediate in the same brewery. The first night of his return he goes to bed, and begins to speak in his sleep. Another man's abed in the same room with him, and that man's awake. 'Yes,' says the murderer in his sleep, 'it's just seven year ago since I did it.' The other man, in a kind of careless way, says, 'What did you do seven year ago?' Upon that, the murderer gets out of bed, and crawls about the room. Then stops still, all of a sudden. Then stands straight up. Then draws an imaginary knife. Then stabs an imaginary man. Stabs him once, twice, three times. Then stops and listens. Then creeps back to bed. All this the workman that's awake sees, because the moon is shining into the room, and it's all so plain that he can't hardly mistake what it means; but to make sure, he says 'What was his

name?' and the murderer mentions the name of the man who was supposed to be drowned seven years ago. 'Did you kill him?' he asks. 'I did,' says the murderer. 'What did you do with the body?' he asks again. 'I put it,' says the murderer in his sleep, 'into the fire under the vat.' That was enough. The next day he was taken in charge, and was so worked upon that he confessed, and was hung."

Seth Dumbrick related this story so dramatically that Sally thought it as good as a play, quite as good as the *Murder at the Red Barn*, which she had seen at the penny show.

"Did you see *him* hung?" she inquired.

"No; it was done in a foreign country, and I missed him. You see, Sally, dreams are significant things sometimes. I don't know what the world 'd do without 'em. There's the Bible—what 'd the Bible be without dreams and visions? Did you ever hear of Pharer?"

"No; was he a relation of Joanna's?"

"Pharer was a king, one o' them kings that you see in the British Museum done up in bundles. He was a Bible man, and had dreams. Then there was Daniel, and all the other prophets—they was always having dreams. I tell you what, Sally. If it wasn't for dreams, there would never have been any prophets. There are your shoes—when you're a grown-up woman, you can pay me for mending 'em."

Sally murmured her thanks, and leant forward to put them on. Seth Dumbrick was also bending forward, and in the act, the precipice of his forehead loomed ominously over Sally, as though it were about to fall upon her. Now, whether it was from some fantastic fear of the occurrence of such a catastrophe, or from her own weak condition, or from the excitement of her mind produced by the strange stories narrated by Seth Dumbrick, Sally, as the cobbler leant over her, gave a sigh, and

sank to the ground, with her shoes in her hand.

Somewhat perplexed by the novelty of the situation, Seth Dumbrick raised Sally without exactly knowing what to do with her. The child's eyes were closed, and she made no movement or response to his inquiries as to what was the matter with her. Every moment adding to the embarrassment of the situation, and reflecting grimly upon what the neighbours might think if they happened to discover him with Sally's dark, passive face lying against his knee, Seth Dumbrick, with a wry expression, decided that the best and most humane plan would be to carry Sally down to his cellar, and there wait for her recovery. He carried her down, not without tenderness, and then returned for the baby, whom he placed on the ground by Sally's side.

During the short time that Sally was left to herself it might not have been quite a

matter of the imagination for an observer —had one been present—to fancy that she raised her eyelids cautiously and cunningly, and looked about her timidly and palpitatingly. But no observer was by, and the cellar was in darkness; and besides, if any clear testimony were required upon the point, it could have been found in Sally's condition when Seth Dumbrick returned with the baby. She lay with closed eyes, and with apparently as little life in her as a stone.

The cellar, as has been said, was in darkness, and only to one accustomed to the gloom could the objects it contained be seen. But Seth had lived in the place for years, and therefore was familiar with every square inch of it, and from long custom his sight had accommodated itself to the shadows by which he loved—for he was by no means an unhappy man—to be surrounded. He made no attempt to light a candle; as Sally lay before him, he could

see her face distinctly, and required none.

"I'd best bathe her head with water," he muttered; "it'll liven her up."

Taking a cup, he dipped it into what looked like a large glass tank, and withdrew it full of water. As he raised it from the surface, a stickleback leapt from the cup, and fell, with a little plash, into the tank. Seth, peering into the cup, inserted his fingers, and lifted out two water-beetles, which he deposited in the tank. Then he knelt by Sally, and laved her face.

Seth Dumbrick was a bachelor, fifty years of age, with no ties of kindred, and desiring none as it seemed, but not entirely without companionship. He was the possessor of an aquarium, constructed by himself, having in its centre a device in rocks, and with weeds, lilies, and what water-plants were in season, floating on the surface through the whole of the year. In the aquarium was a strange collection of

fish and reptiles, comprising gold and silver fish, sticklebacks, silver pike, water worms and beetles, and as many varieties as Seth could gather and purchase of the fantastic Salamander. Of a certain species of this family of Salamandridæ, with large lustrous yellow spots and stripes which Seth claimed to come from Japan, and which he called his water-leopards, Seth was particularly proud. The rocks in the centre of the aquarium came sheer out of the water to suit the habit of those of his creatures amphibiously inclined, and it was from this aquarium he drew the water to restore Sally to consciousness.

But Sally's attack was one of the most obstinate nature, and she showed no signs of recovery. The more Seth bathed her face and head the more insensible she appeared to become, and Seth, not being accustomed to such "tantrums," as he called them, was doubtful, after a great exercise of patience, whether he was adopt-

ing the proper means for the recovery of the patient. And in a little while he was sensible of a creeping fear that Sally had taken her departure from this world of trouble to one where trouble was not known. "But that can't be," he murmured, as he placed his ear to her bosom, "for her heart's beating."

It *was* beating, and very violently for a child in Sally's weak condition. Seth questioned of himself whether it was natural that the hearts of persons who were in the habit of falling into trances should beat so loudly as Sally's heart was beating now, and while he was considering the knotty point in silent perplexity, Sally's eyelids where cautiously raised, and she strove to pierce the darkness which surrounded her. She saw nothing, not even the eyes of Seth Dumbrick, which were fixed upon hers, in close observance.

"Sally!" called Seth, relieved at this sudden recovery.

Sally's eyelids were immediately closed, and from Sally's lips came no reply. Seth waited and watched for two or three minutes, but Sally was still unconscious. Then Seth, with somewhat of a demonstrative noise, walked towards the steps which led to daylight and the world, and instantly walked back to Sally's side on tiptoe, so softly and noiselessly that the most timid mouse might have been deceived. Sally again opened her eyes, and this time she slightly raised herself from the ground.

"Sally!" again called Seth.

Sally hastily resumed her recumbent position, and was dumb. An expression of comic amusement stole into Seth's face. He went to the aquarium, and dipping in his cup, carefully fished up a water-beetle with a score of slender legs.

"Poor Sally! Poor little thing!" murmured Seth, as he gently placed the water-beetle on Sally's face, over which it instantly began to crawl.

Sally screamed loudly, and jumped up. Seth gave a dry laugh, and replaced the water-beetle in the aquarium.

"Oh, oh!" cried Sally. "Where am I?"

"Don't be frightened, Sally," replied Seth. "You're in my cellar."

"It's so dark!" moaned Sally.

"It won't be after you've been here often," said Seth, in a sly tone. "What's been the matter with you, Sal?"

Sally's answer was prompt. "I've been in a trance."

"And you've had a vision," suggested Seth.

"Oh, yes, yes," cried Sally. "How did you know?"

Seth chuckled. "And you're going to prophesy," he said.

"Yes, yes!"

"Fire away, then," said Seth, shaking with laughter. But his laughter was noiseless, and Sally neither saw nor heard it.

CHAPTER XI.

SALLY HAS AN INTERVIEW WITH PHARAOH, KING OF EGYPT.

SALLY hesitated before she made her first move. Playing at trances was a new game to her, and she was in the dark in more ways than one. But the crisis was an imminent one, and she was vaguely conscious that none but bold measures would help her safely through it. Yet she approached her subject warily, unaware that Seth's accustomed eyes could plainly discern the working of every muscle in her face.

"I went off all of a sudden, didn't I?" was her first inquiry.

"You did, Sally," replied Seth, "without saying with your leave or by your leave."

"And you tried to bring me to."

"Ah."

"And couldn't."

"Right you are, Sally."

"Then you carried me down here."

"How do you know that?" asked Seth, so abruptly as to shake her nerves.

"You must have done," she said, in feverish haste. "How could I be here else? I couldn't have walked, could I? People don't walk in trances, do they? Joanna didn't walk when she was in a trance, did she?"

"Well, no, Sal," answered Seth, the corners of his eyelids wrinkling up with amusement. "People don't walk in trances, so far as I know. I never heard that Joanna walked when she was in a trance."

A sigh of relief escaped Sally's bosom at this confirmatory evidence, and was followed by a chuckle from Seth.

"It stands to reason, Sal, that if Joanna had ha' walked, you'd ha' walked."

"In course I should," said Sally innocently. "Did I go off like Joanna?"

"I should say there warn't a pin to choose between you."

A cunning smile played about Sally's lips. "You put somethink on my face."

"Water, Sal, to bring you to."

"But somethink else," said Sally, with a slight shudder, "somethink that crept and frightened me."

"You see, Sally, you was so bad, and wanted such a deal of bringing to, that I had to take the water from my aquarium——"

"What's that?"

"You'll know by-and-by. There's fish in it, and all sorts of things, and when I dipped the cup in, out come a water-beetle. There ain't a bit of harm in the little creatures, but they *do* creep! Now for the vision, Sally."

Sally puckered her eyebrows, and tightly interlaced her little fingers.

"It was dark and it was light," she slowly commenced.

"Not both at once. That could hardly be—though we don't quite know what happens in trances."

"No, we don't, do we? It wasn't light and dark together. First it was dark, and then it was light. I couldn't see a wision in the dark, could I?"

"I should say not, Sal; but I never was in a trance, you know. I ain't one o' the prophesying sort."

"So it *must* ha' been light when it come. There were all sorts o' things flying about—birds, and angels, and spirits. It was splendid. Then all of a sudden, a king comes to me done up in a bundle."

"Pharer," suggested Seth, in the midst of a quiet fit of laughter.

"Yes, Pharer, it was," said Sally eagerly adopting the suggestion.

"Because that's the only old king you ever heard on, Sal."

"Yes. Well, Pharer come——"

"Stop a minute, Sal. What was he like?"

"Didn't you never see him?"

"I never set eyes on the old feller."

A deeper puckering of Sally's eyebrows, and a tighter interlacing of her little fingers.

"He was done up in a bundle, you know, and I didn't see much of him."

"Was he like the doll outside old Adam's rag and bone shop?"

"A little bit."

"Only he didn't have a black face."

"No," said Sally, following the cues with heaving bosom.

"But his face *was* painted."

"In course it was."

"In stripes. Red, and yaller, and green."

"Yes, he looked so rum! And he had a big gold crown on his head."

"Ah," said Seth, in a tone of sly satis-

faction, "now I can say I've seen Pharer if anybody asks me. Go on, Sal."

"Well, he come, and said——"

"Ho! ho! Sally! he spoke to you, did he?"

"Yes, he said a lot."

"Now," mused Seth, hugging himself in great enjoyment, "how did he speak?"

"With his tongue," replied Sally, with precocious sharpness.

"Yes, yes, with his tongue, o' course. Kings, even old uns like Pharer, are the same as us in that respect. But in what language? It couldn't be Hebrew, 'cause he hated the Jews, and wouldn't have lowered himself to it. Besides, if he had, you wouldn't have understood him."

"Not in a trance?" asked Sally in a cunning tone.

"I should say," replied Seth very gravely, "not even in a trance."

"Why, then, he spoke what I'm speak-

ing to you, and what you're speaking to me —jist the same."

"That settles it, then. Taffy was a Welshman, and Pharer was an Englishman. Well, Sally, he come, and he said——"

"'Git up, Sally,' he says, 'and come along o' me; I'm going to show you somethink.' I got up and went along of him."

"The people must have stared, Sal, to see you and Pharer walking together."

"We didn't mind that. We walks straight to the horspital, and there's father laying in bed. 'Shall I ever git better?' says father to Pharer. 'No,' says Pharer, 'you'll never git better. Do you hear, Sal? Father 'll never git better.' Then we goes out of the horspital, me and Pharer, and walks miles and miles into the country, and we come to a big, big place with stone walls. 'Mother's in there, Sal,' says Pharer; and I peeps through and sees poor mother working and working."

"Was it a prison, then, that mother was in?"

"No, it was a workus. 'If you was to go to her,' says Pharer, 'she'd be turned away. She's got eighteen pound a year.' Is that a lot?" asked Sally, suddenly breaking off.

"It's a lot, taken in a lump," replied Seth, upon whose face a more thoughtful expression was gathering, "and a year's a lot, too, Sally."

"Is three-and-sixpence a week a lot for a gal's keep?" asked Sally, pursuing her inquiries.

"What sort of a gal, now? One as'd make herself handy?"

"Oh, yes; and do anythink, never mind what. Clean and scrub, and git up early and light the fire, and go of errands——" Thus Sally breathlessly ran on.

"But this gal's a small gal—almost a mite—not strong enough to do all that."

"She'd git bigger, and stronger, and

older, every day. And you don't know, oh, you don't know what she wouldn't do, if you wanted her to! And she'd be as good as gold."

"Then this gal's liable to fainting dead away, without notice——"

"She wouldn't do it!" cried Sally, beating her hands together, and creeping closer to Seth; "she wouldn't do it, if you did't want her to!"

"—And of falling into trances—"

"She'd never do so agin, this gal wouldn't, if you didn't want her to!"

"Three-and-sixpence wouldn't go far, Sal, but it's something. What next did Pharer say?"

"'She's got eighteen pound a year,' says Pharer, 'and she's been obliged to go away from you 'cause she's so poor, and couldn't git nothink to eat; but she's a giving somebody three-and-sixpence a week for your keep.'"

"Ah, ah, Sally, now we're coming to it.'

"After that, Pharer looks at baby——"

"Saying anything about *her* keep, Sal?"

"Oh, no; there's no need to. *I* keep *her*, you know; *I* take care of *her*. I nurse her, and wash her, and dress her, and put her to bed, and she's no trouble to nobody."

"Not even to you, Sal, I suppose."

"Not to me—oh, no, not to me, 'cause I love her, and she's the beautifullest baby there ever was! Pharer looks at her, and says, 'When baby grows up, she'll be a lady, and 'll have fine clothes, and 'll give everybody money who's been good to her. That's sure to come true, that is."

"Pharer says?"

"No, *I* say. It's sure to come true. You mind, now! Whoever's good to baby 'll be done good to."

"A good Christian sentiment, Sal. And then?"

"Then," said Sally abruptly, "Pharer goes away."

"Walks away?"

"No, flies away, and is swallowed up like. That's all of it."

And with her heart beating as fast as if she were in a high state of fever, Sally, whose hand was resting on Seth's knee, waited in the deepest anxiety to learn her fate.

Seth put his hand down, and it touched Sally's face. He gave a start as he touched her cheek, which was wet with her tears, fast and silently flowing.

"Sally," he said, "you've got a brother."

"I'll tell you somethink," rejoined Sally quietly and solemnly; "but you mustn't tell him, or he'd beat me."

"I won't tell him, my child."

"Eh!" cried Sally, with a sound that was half a laugh and half a sob. "Say that agin! Say that agin!"

"I won't tell him, my child,"

"Oh, my! oh, my!" and Sally laid her head on Seth's knee, and cried without any attempt at concealment.

"Now, Sally, dry your eyes. Go on about your brother."

"I don't think," sobbed Sally, "as he's any good."

"Why?"

"It was him as made father ill, and him as made mother poor. And last night, when I was a-bed, pretending to be asleep, I sor him eating up all the bread and drinking up all the tea. And when he went away, mother cried and cried."

Many moments passed in silence. Then Seth rose, and lit a candle, Sally following his movements with undisguised anxiety.

"Look about you, Sal."

Sally gazed with longing admiring eyes at the treasures of the cellar, which was a veritable Aladdin's cave in her sight. It was with difficulty she removed her eyes from the aquarium, which was something so entirely outside her experience as to make it a marvel indeed.

"Here's my bed, Sally; and here's my

cupboard; and here's my frying-pan and saucepan and kittle, all in order, you see, all clean and tidy." As he seemed to expect an answer, Sally nodded. "Now here," he continued, lifting a blanket which, hung on a line, divided off a portion of the cellar, "is a place where two young uns might sleep, supposing such an out and out out-of-the-way circumstance should ever occur to Seth Dumbrick as taking two ready-made young uns—both gals, too, and mischievous, of course——"

"Oh, no," interrupted Sally positively, "not mischievous. Good."

"You're not fit to judge. Supposing, I say, such an extraordinary and ridiculous—don't interrupt, Sal—and ridiculous circumstance was to occur to Seth Dumbrick as his taking two gals, one of 'em a baby——"

"Such a beauty!" again interrupted the irrepressible Sally. "Kiss him, baby."

She put baby's face to his, and, utterly confounded and unable to resist, Seth Dum-

brick kissed a pair of lips for the first time for Heaven knows how many years.

"If I believed in the Bible," he muttered, "which I don't, it'd be almost like kissing that. Sally, will you stop here, quiet, while I go out a bit?"

"Yes," replied Sally joyfully.

"And won't move, and won't touch a thing?"

"No, I won't—I won't!"

"And you won't mind settin in the dark?"

"N—no," said Sally, with a little shiver.

"One soon gets used to it."

"*I* would," said Sally, becoming suddenly brave.

"I can't afford to burn candles all day long. You won't touch the aquarium, or put your fingers in the water?"

"No—no; I'll never!"

"Because *my* fish bite, Sally."

"I won't move from here, Mr. Dumbrick," protested Sally, grouping mentally

for some strong affirmation. "I hope I may never move at all if I do!"

"Very well; I sha'n't be gone long."

Seth Dumbrick went straight towards Mrs. Chester's lodgings. He met that good woman on his way, inquiring anxiously of her neighbours whether they had seen anything of her child.

"She's at my place," said Seth, "with her baby, and has been there ever so long."

"You've lifted a weight off my heart," said Mrs. Chester. "I was afraid Sally was run over. I'll give it her when she comes home!"

"Home!" echoed Seth.

"Yes, home," repeated Mrs. Chester.

"For how long?" asked Seth.

Mrs. Chester turned very white, and looked at Seth Dumbrick for an explanation.

"I've come to have a chat with you about Sally, and about yourself, if you don't mind, Mrs. Chester," he said, with a curious hesi-

tation. "What sort of a man do you consider me to be?"

"I don't know any harm of you, Mr. Dumbrick."

"H'm! That's neither one thing or the other. It don't matter, though. I'd like to hear the rights of the story about Sally's baby, if you've no objection."

Mrs. Chester related what she knew, and Seth Dumbrick listened thoughtfully and attentively.

"And you've never since set eyes on the man who brought the child to your house?"

"Never before or since, Mr. Dumbrick."

"There's a mystery in it," mused Seth, "and I'm partial to mystery. Here we are at your place. May I come up?"

Without waiting for permission, he pushed his way upstairs, and entered Mrs. Chester's room. In the first glance he saw the state of poverty to which she was reduced. Unceremoniously he went to the

cupboard, and opened it; there was no food on the shelves. Then he turned to Mrs. Chester, and fixed his great grey eyes on her so piercingly that she began to grow frightened.

"You're a married woman. Where's your wedding-ring?"

She placed her left hand quickly behind her.

"I don't mean no harm. Where is it?"

"In pawn."

"And that's always the last thing to go, Mrs. Chester."

Weak and sick, she sank, panting, into a chair.

"Sally's been in a trance, Mrs. Chester. Don't be frightened; there's nothing dangerous in it. She's all right now. Your husband's in the hospital?"

"Yes," she sighed.

"And you're going to take a situation in a workus."

"Who told you?" cried Mrs. Chester, her tears beginning to flow.

"Some distance from here it is, and you'll get eighteen pound a year. And you don't mind giving three-and-sixpence a week to any one who'll take care of Sally."

"I don't know where you found out all this," sobbed Mrs. Chester; "but it's true. I've been trying all the morning to get a place for Sally—she's a handy little thing, Mr. Dumbrick—but can't find one. Everybody's full enough of trouble as it is, without wishing for more. I don't blame 'em, I'm sure, but I feel that desperate that I'm fit to make away with myself. Do you think I'd part with my child if I could possibly help it?"

"I never had one," replied Seth gravely, "so I'm no judge. Mrs. Chester, I'm a lonely man, and have lived a lonely life. You know me, and what I am. I'm never out of work, and I never intend to be, if I

can help it. I don't set myself up as a good man, but I dare say I'd pass in a crowd. Do you see what I'm driving at?"

"Not exactly, Mr. Dumbrick."

"I've felt sometimes lately, when I've been settin alone in my cellar, as if I'd like some one to talk to, some creature like myself about me to look at. I'd as soon set fire to my place as take a woman in it, and a boy 'd plague the life out of me. But a little girl, or a little girl and a baby, I wouldn't so much mind. She could make herself handy, and 'd grow into my ways. Now do you see what I'm driving at?"

"You mean that you'd take Sally, and keep her, if I paid you three-and-sixpence a week."

"Partly right and partly wrong. I mean that I've no objections to take Sally and the little creature as seems to be cast upon the world without a friend, and give 'em both their meals and a bed. In time I don't doubt Sally 'd be able to do as much in my

place as a grown-up woman could, and wouldn't give herself the airs of one. So far you're right. But you're not as to the three-and-sixpence a week."

"Would you want more, Mr. Dumbrick?" asked Mrs. Chester imploringly.

"I've been reckoning up as I came along how much a year three-and-sixpence a week is, and I make it out to be more than nine pound. That's a big hole in eighteen pound. You wouldn't be able to save a shilling out of it."

"I don't want to; I only want to live. God help us! Poor people *must* live as well as rich."

"They've as much right to, certainly, but that's not to the point. This is. I ain't willing to take three-and-sixpence a week. I'll take half-a-crown."

"God bless you, Mr. Dumbrick! How shall I ever thank you?"

Seth made a wry face at the blessing.

"But I've got a bargain of another kind

to make. There's Sally's baby. She comes too, o' course, and we don't reckon her. She's thrown in, as a body might say—a kind o' make-weight. Now Sally belongs to you, and 's your child."

"Yes, Mr. Dumbrick."

"You've got the first claim on her, and I reckon you're fond of her,"

Mrs. Chester sighed an eloquent assent.

"One of these fine days," continued Seth, "you might make your fortune sudden." (Mrs. Chester thought of her lovely lad and his lucky mole, and listened with greater interest.) "You might pick up a purse o' money, or an old pauper might die, and when you ripped up her clothes you might find 'em stuffed with bank-notes. In that case you'd come to me and take Sally away."

"It ain't likely any of them things 'll happen, Mr. Dumbrick."

"I've heard of stranger things. Now I go on again. I should by that time have

LIBRARY
UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS

got used to Sally, perhaps, and shouldn't like to part with her. That wouldn't matter to you. You'd take her. But there's the other. *She's* not your child."

"No more than she's yours, Mr. Dumbrick."

"And you've got no claim on her."

"No more than you have."

"Very well, then. Now I make this bargain with you, Mrs. Chester. I'll take the children for half-a-crown a week, but the baby's mine, and not yours. If ever anything should happen as 'd make you want to take Sally away, you wouldn't take the baby away as well. She'd be mine, and you'd have no right to her. You understand?"

"Perfectly, and I'm quite agreeable. A mother's got enough to do with her own children, without being saddled with strange ones. Though this little one is a beautiful child, Mr. Dumbrick, and my heart warmed to her, so that if I could afford it I'd be glad

to keep her. God help those who've deserted her so cruelly!"

"Then it's a bargain, and I'll go home and send Sally to you. When do you think of starting?"

"As soon as possible; perhaps to-morrow; but Dr. Lyon will settle that."

"You'd best keep the young uns with you till you go away. Then you can bring 'em to me, and make 'em over."

"You'll be kind to Sally, Mr. Dumbrick."

Seth rasped his chin with his horny hand. "As kind as it's in my nature to be; I can't promise more than that."

"And you won't mind her fainting away now and then; she'll get over it as she grows, I hope."

"I've had a sample, and I don't mind it much. To tell you the truth," he added grimly, "it amuses me."

Mrs. Chester looked doubtful; Sally's fainting dead away had not been an amusement to her, and she was fearful that Seth

was disposed to make light of her child's misfortune; but the quaint smile which came to Seth's lips after his remark had so much of kindness in it that she was re-assured.

"I can trust you, I think, Mr. Dumbrick."

"If I wasn't sure you could, I wouldn't have come to you," was his reply, and then he paused for a moment or two. "Mrs. Chester, I can spare you two shillings if you're in need of it."

This was sufficient evidence, and Mrs. Chester gratefully pressed his hand. Seth placed two shillings on the table, and walked off quickly.

That night everything was settled; Dr. Lyon advised Mrs. Chester not to delay, and she agreed to go to her situation on the following day. He spoke well of Seth Dumbrick also.

"He has a rough outside," said the sensible doctor, "but it covers a kernel of

goodness, if I don't mistake. The strawberry, you know, Mrs. Chester, grows underneath the nettle."

"Yes, sir," replied Mrs. Chester, seeing but vaguely the application.

Mrs. Chester had no heart to bid farewell to her neighbours. She left Rosemary Lane almost by stealth, going first to Seth Dumbrick with the two children.

"You'd like to see my place, perhaps," said Seth, and led the way to his cellar.

Mrs. Chester was dismayed somewhat by the gloomy look of the apartment.

"It is very dark, Mr. Dumbrick."

"Not when one's accustomed to it," was the reply; "besides there's a bit o' light behind the cloud."

He went to the back, and opened a door which disclosed a flight of steps, leading up to a yard in the rear of the house. The sun happened to be shining brightly, and the

light struggling in gave the cellar a more habitable appearance.

"I've sometimes thought of having a window let in," said Seth; "perhaps I'll do it after a bit. And there's nothing to be said against it at night."

In fact there *was* an undiscovered window in the back wall, hidden by shutters. Seth seemed to wish not to make the bargain an attractive one in Mrs. Chester's eyes. She knelt before Sally, and kissed her and cried over her.

"You're sorry I'm going to leave you, my pet—say you're sorry."

Sally required no prompting. She loved her mother, but her practical little wits had gauged the situation, and she had done the best she could in the circumstances. Seth, with delicate forethought, left the mother and the children alone, and mounted to his stall, where he continued his work of soling and heeling and patching. Presently, Mrs.

Chester stood by his side. He walked with her down the street.

"Don't take on," he said; "I'll look after Sally, and she'll always have a belly full. We can't choose our lots. Now, I'll wager Sally don't know her letters."

"She don't," sobbed the mother.

"I'll teach her to read, and I'll write to you at odd times and let you know how she's getting along. You can always write to me here, if you've anything to say. I'm settled in Rosemary Lane for life. Good-bye; I wish you better days."

He left her in the charge of her lovely lad, Ned, the cause of all her trouble. She was to take coach to the country, and her son accompanied her to the yard it started from, grumbling all the way at his hard lot; for now his mother was leaving him, he had no loving nature to impose upon.

"If ever you're in trouble, my dear boy," sobbed Mrs. Chester, "don't keep it from me."

"I won't," he replied, with much sincerity.

"And if ever you grow rich, Ned——"

The contemplation of this happy certainty in the future lightened her heart, and assuaged her grief, and with many kisses and many tears she bade farewell to him and to the neighbourhood endeared to her in many ways, notwithstanding the hard fortune she had experienced there.

In the meantime Seth Dumbrick retraced his way to his stall, somewhat unsettled in his mind as to the wisdom of the step he had taken. It meant to him an important change in life, perhaps a breaking up of old and settled habits; but he was something of a philosopher, and nothing troubled him for more than a day at the most. In his cellar he found Sally very industriously washing up some dirty plates; comfortably propped on a chair was the treasure-baby. Seth glanced suspiciously round to note if anything which should not have been dis-

turbed was out of its place; Sally's eyes followed his with sly satisfaction.

"I can almost see, Mr. Dumbrick," she said.

She had finished washing the crockery, and was now ostentatiously wiping her bare arms, like a little old woman of sixty.

Seth smiled, and his uncertainty was at an end for the time. In truth, there was a ring in Sally's small shrill voice that touched his heart, and produced a new and pleasant vibration there.

"I keep my eyes wide open," continued Sally, "as wide as wide can be, and the things come out of the darkness to meet me. Jist look; I can walk all about, without touching a thing."

Sally established her assertion by winding her way quickly about the dark room, round the table, in and out of the chairs, round the aquarium, and all with such pre-

cision and anxious desire to please as could not fail to elicit approval.

"You're a cunning little sinner," said Seth, "and I don't doubt that you, me, and baby 'll get along pretty well together."

CHAPTER XII.

THE PHILOSOPHY OF IT.

"SALLY," said Seth Dumbrick, a fortnight afterwards; "I'm beginning to be bothered in my mind."

It was night. Seth was playing "patience" with a very old and very greasy pack of cards. Sally was doing her best to mend her baby's clothes; she was as yet but an indifferent workgirl with the needle. It was not an unpleasant sight to see her taking her stitches, with knitted brow, and pursed-up lips, as though the fate of an empire was in the balance every time she dug her needle in and drew it out again. She had commenced the battle of life very early, but she had put on her armour with

great cheerfulness and contentment, and was perhaps at the present moment the happiest little girl in Rosemary Lane. Her baby was asleep on the ground, comfortably covered over.

"I'm beginning to be bothered in my mind," said Seth.

Sally, ready for the bestowal of sympathy looked up from her work.

"About what?" she asked.

"Many things. That trance of yours, to begin with. It didn't go fur enough. Now, you, as a prophetess—do you consider it an out-an-out prophecy?"

The grave air he assumed would have deceived a much riper intellect than Sally's. She prepared to discuss the matter seriously.

"It all come true, Mr. Dumbrick."

"No doubt of that—here you are in proof of that, and there's your father in the hospital, and there's your mother a-managing the workus in the country. It

was good enough as fur as it went, but it's come to an end already, and there's no more to look forward to. That's what I call not satisfactory."

"No, Mr. Dumbrick?"

"No, Sally Chester. Pharer wasn't half a feller. Them spirits that came to Joanna when she went off that way, and prophesied, beat him hollow. He couldn't hold a candle to 'em."

Much distressed by this depreciatory criticism, Sally said,

"It was Pharer's first go, Mr. Dumbrick. Perhaps he wasn't quite up to the business."

For the life of him Seth could not repress a laugh.

"There's something in that, Sally. Practice makes perfect, sure. Now, you couldn't sole and heel a pair o' boots the first time of asking; but you'd manage it in a year or two, with plenty of tutoring. But about them spirits of Joanna's; they

told all sorts o' things about the future, and they was always at it. And Joanna lived to be an old woman, and to the last day of her life she kept trancing away. Now, you've only had one trance, Sally."

"Yes, Mr. Dumbrick." assented Sally, with a troubled mind, "only one."

"And it don't seem likely that you'll have another."

"Yes, it does—yes, it does. I've felt it coming on more than once."

"How *does* it feel, Sally?" inquired Seth, with an open chuckle.

"A kind o' creepy like, and everything going round."

"That sounds well."

"What is it you want to know, Mr. Dumbrick?"

"Well, there's baby, Sally. She won't be a baby all her life. She'll grow up to be a woman—so will you."

Sally nodded, and listened with all her soul in her ears.

"She's got no name except Baby, and it stands to reason that that won't do all along. We must find something else to call her by; it won't be fair to her otherwise, and she wouldn't thank us for it when she grows up. It 'd never do to have her grow up ungrateful, and to fly at us for not giving her what everybody else has got."

"Oh! no—never, never! But she'll love us always—you'll see if she won't."

"The proof of a pudding's in the eating, Sally. I've seen some strange things in my life——"

"All them men that was hung," interrupted Sally.

"Yes," said Seth, with a grimace, "and I've read of stranger. Talking of reading —— but we'll come to that presently. You see, Sally, things don't always turn out as they ought—to speak the honest truth (which is a good enough thing to do when there's no special occasion to speak

otherwise), things very seldom turn out as they ought. In a natural way, you two young uns living here with me—— You like it, Sally?"

"So much—so much! you don't know what I think."

"Nor you, either, I expect, little un," said Seth, with so kindly a gleam in his eyes that his precipitous forehead seemed very much out of place. "Well, in a natural way, you two living here with me should be my own children, instead of coming to me ready-made. Which has its advantages, Sally, which has its advantages! There's two sides to everything. As for that little painting there—she's as pretty as one, Sally—loving me always, or loving you always, don't you set your mind too much on it. It's an unfortunate circumstance that we've got feelings, and that we can't go agin 'em. Perhaps our baby 'll see somebody by-and-by that she'll love better than you or me, and then we'll go to the wall.

We're like fiddles, Sally, and Nature's the fiddler, and plays on us."

Open-eyed, and mentally as well as physically wide awake, Sally listened to this dissertation without exactly understanding it, but dimly conscious that something very fine was being propounded to her.

"There aren't many strings in us, young un, but, Lord! the number o' tunes that Nature plays on us! And we go through life dancing to 'em, or hobbling to 'em, as the case may be. We haven't much to do with the music ourselves, Sally. It comes, and makes us pleased or makes us sorry, and we laugh or cry from instinct. As this little picture 'll do, according to the kind o' music that comes to her. There's people that say we're accountable for what we do; I hold a different opinion. We're not accountable, in the main, for what happens, and we're guided in the main, by what happens. There it is. All the phi-

losophy of life in a nutshell. As for what takes place when Nature's played her last tune on us, that's beyond you and me, Sally,"

"Yes, Mr. Dumbrick," assented Sally, feeling it incumbent upon her to say something, but groping now in such dark depths that she saw no way out of them.

Seth's next utterances, however, brought a little light to her.

"In all that, there are certain things—not many—that we may fairly take credit for. You love baby."

"That I do—that I do!" exclaimed Sally, with fervour.

"More than you love yourself, I do believe, Sally. You've got a big heart in a little body. I'd wager my cobbler's stall that I'm going to sit on in the clouds when your dream comes true—I'd wager that to a brass thimble that if you had only one bit o' bread, and you was hungry

as you could be, you'd give it to baby, if she cried for it."

Two or three bright tears glistened in Sally's eyes, which Seth accepted as confirmation.

"Take credit for that, Sally."

"Thank you, Mr. Dumbrick," said Sally gratefully, satisfied with this reward of good words for good intentions.

"I'm going to take credit, too, Sally. I said just now, 'talking of reading,' when I interrupted myself. Well, I'm going to learn you and baby to read and write."

"O! Mr. Dumbrick!"

"That's as much as a real father could do. Reading's a grand thing, Sally. We've much to be thankful for. Be thankful, Sally."

"I am, Mr. Dumbrick, I am, oh, so much!"

"I don't like that mister, Sally."

"No?" questioned Sally, for ever on

the alert to discover her guardians likes or dislikes.

"It's too much like company manners. Now that we're comfortably settled we ought to be more sociable. Call me Dad, or Daddy, or Daddy Dumbrick. Your tongue 'll soon get used to it,"

"Yes, Mr.——Dad-dy Dumbrick."

Sally's tongue tripped so comically over the new terms that she laughed, and Seth grimly joined in the merriment.

"We soon get used to things, Sally. Once on a time we usedn't to live in houses."

"In what, then, Daddy Dumbrick?"

"In tents and forests and fields and that like."

"As the gipsies do," cried Sally. "I've seed 'em. Mother took me to a fair once."

"Now we live in garrets and cellars, and sweet-smelling habitations."

Sally looked dubious. Many of the houses round about Rosemary Lane were

far from sweet-smelling, and she could not realise the advantage of the present over the past of which Seth was evidently boasting. To live in a tent in forest or field was a dream of Elysium to her, with flowers growing around her home and green grass waving. Too good for earth.

"Once on a time," continued Seth, "we couldn't read; now we can. Once on a time we wasn't civilised; now we are. Lord! we've much more to be thankful for than we know of. This is the age of enlightenment, Sally. Before we was enlightened we used to fight and kill and make slaves of one another, and behave ourselves generally in a benighted way. But more than eighteen hundred year ago all that was done away with, and we've been ever since a peaceful happy race. The things we used to do then, and the things we do now! You'll hardly believe, when you come to know, how much we've improved."

This new pleasure of talking at length and

being listened to attentively and with reverence was very sweet to Seth; it banished all doubt as to the wisdom of the innovation he had made in his domestic life.

"So as you've got a battle to fight, you and our baby, I'm going to learn you to read."

"What battle, Mr.——"

"Daddy!"

"Daddy Dumbrick. What battle?"

"Life. It's a fight, and a hard un. A few lucky uns, when they get knocked down, fall on feather beds; all the others fall on sharp stones. The thing is, supposing you ain't got a feather bed to fall on—which you ain't, I suspect."

"No, Daddy."

"Then the thing is to try and not get knocked down; and to do this——" Seth paused and glanced shrewdly at Sally.

"Yes, Daddy."

"To prevent being knocked down yourself, you must knock down the others. It's

the only way. Now how are you going to bring this about? With your naked fists and uneducated tongue? No. How, then? In this way. With holding your tongue when it's necessary and speaking when it's necessary—with scheming, which is always necessary—with telling the truth when it's necessary, and telling the other thing when it's necessary—with crying and fawning and flattering, when it's necessary. Then comes the question, how to find out when it's necessary to do one thing or the other? Will Nature learn you? No. Nature's too honest and outspoken. But reading 'll help you a bit. It 'll show you the ins and outs of the human mind, and 'll put things into your head as 'll make you sorry perhaps if you've a tender heart and a sensitive spirit; but 'll make you fit to knock down the others as are always on the look-out to knock down you. That's the philosophy of it. So the best thing to do 'll be to give you your first lesson."

Sally hastily put aside her work, and kneeling by baby's side stooped and kissed her. Seth, who had risen in search of a book, looked down upon the children.

"Don't you forget, Sally, what I said about baby."

"I won't forget, Daddy Dumbrick."

"Nor about you're going off in a trance. No, no, Sally!" he cried, putting his hand to his side to restrain his merriment; "not now. Don't you go fainting dead away now; we've got something else to do."

"I wasn't going to, Daddy," said Sally timorously, and with something like a blush on her thin sallow face.

"Bravo, Sally; there's some lessons you know without being able to read—to tell the truth when it's necessary, and to tell the other thing when it's necessary. You little sinner, you! You've the gumption of twenty grown-up women in that little carcass of yours."

As she was not sure whether she was

being praised or condemned, Sally preserved a discreet silence.

"Pharer," continued Seth, "wasn't much of a spirit when compared with them that came to Joanna, was he, Sally?"

"Not as yet," replied Sally with deep lines in her small forehead; "but perhaps he will be—perhaps he'll beat 'em after all."

"And then there's yourself," observed Seth, with a sly twinkle. "I don't want *you* to be beat by Joanna. So bear in mind what I've said, and come and sit down."

Sally obeyed, with a countenance which denoted how seriously she regarded her guardian's admonition.

"My library ain't a large un, Sally, and I've picked out a book as 'll be most suitable in one way if not in another. It's a large book and the print is large; it belonged to my mother, and I've read it through and through, though I ain't troubled it lately."

He brought forward a great heavy quarto with old broken clasps, and opened it.

"I shall read out loud the first few words and then you shall learn the letters one by one. Keep your eyes and your mind open and come closer."

So saying, Seth, taking the fore-finger of Sally's right hand as a marker, read slowly the words, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."

CHAPTER XIII.

SALLY HAS A PARTY.

SETH DUMBRICK never raised his eyes from his work the next morning when Sally Chester, who had been standing silently by his side for full five minutes, suddenly said:

"Pharer come agin last night, Daddy."

"I thought he would, Sally. When?"

"In the middle of the night, when I was asleep. That's as good as a trance, ain't it?"

"Every bit as good. A trance is a sleep, you know. Well?"

"He looked just the same——"

"Not a minute older, eh, Sally?"

"I don't think so."

"Stop a bit," said Seth, with beaming

eyes, which contradicted the thoughtful action of slightly moistening his palm with his tongue and rubbing it dry on his chin, "this must be looked into. We don't want any imposition kings coming to us, Sally, and taking us in."

"In course not," said Sally, with a sinking heart.

"And Pharer's took a fancy to you evidently, and 'll keep up the acquaintance likely enough for many and many a year. Now what we've got to be certain of is that he is the genuine article, and not a common everyday sort of feller, passing himself off as a king, and *such* a king, as you'll find out when we get along with our reading, It don't so much matter now, for it's only a little while ago that you first saw him. But this is the way of it. Pharer's got dark hair, hasn't he?"

"Yes, he has," said Sally, with bold assurance.

"Very well. All Egyptians' hair is

dark; but it don't always keep so; it gets grey, then white, naturally. Now, suppose Pharer comes to you in a trance, say in twenty years' time, he'll be twenty years older and his hair 'll have to be grey or white by then, or he's not a genuine spirit, that's all; you'll have to look out for that."

"I will," said Sally, with emphatic nods; "he sha'n't take me in."

"That's right. Fire away."

Having escaped from this dangerous rock, Sally proceeded.

"'Baby must have a name given to her,' says Pharer, 'and it's got to be done proper.' 'What name?' says I. 'I don't know," says Pharer——"

"Not much of a spirit," murmured Seth; "not by any means what I should call a tiptop spirit."

"'There's only one man,' says Pharer," continued Sally, perplexed and discomposed by these interruptions, "'as can give baby

a proper name, and that man's Daddy Dumbrick.' "

"Oh, oh!" exclaimed Seth. "He knows my new title already."

"Spirits know everything," observed Sally oracularly. "Then Pharer takes me —where do you think?"

"*I'm* not a prophet, Sally."

"Not fur; not any way at all. He takes me to where we all live."

"Downstairs?"

"Yes, downstairs. And it's night, and there's more than one candle alight; and the fish in the quarian is swimming about, wide awake, salamanders and all; and there's a party."

Seth gave a long soft whistle. "That's a mistake, Sally. There couldn't be a party."

"There was," said Sally positively.

"Men and women?"

"No; boys and gals."

"Ah, ah! That's bad enough, but it's better than t'other."

"There was Jane Preedy, and Betsy Newbiggin, and Ann Taylor, and Jimmy Platt, and a lot more, all dressed out; and there was baby, dressed out splendider than all of 'em put together, and there was me, and you."

"What was I doing?"

"You was giving baby a name. 'And mind,' says Pharer, 'baby's a little lady, and she's got to have a grand name, better than mine, or your'n, or anybody else's.'"

"When was this party given, Sally?"

"What's to-day, Daddy Dumbrick?"

"Wednesday."

"The party was given next Monday," replied Sally, in utter defiance of all natural rules and laws, "next Monday as ever was."

"It must be done, I suppose," said Seth, with a sigh of comical resignation, "or Pharer 'll never come to you again."

"Never," declared Sally.

"Then there's no help for it. You can

ask all the little ragamuffins in the neighbourhood to the christening."

"O Daddy, you *are* good—you *are* good!" and out of the depth of her gratitude Sally put her arms round Seth's neck, and kissed him half-a-dozen times without meeting with any opposition.

"Seth Dumbrick, Seth Dumbrick," quoth Seth mentally, "there's something happening to you as *you* never dreamt of in all your born days."

In good truth, Seth was enjoying this new state of things. He would have been well content to have led his solitary life to the end of his days, supposing he had never met with this unlooked-for experience, but he would not have liked, now that he had tasted the sweets of companionship, to be compelled to relapse into his old ways. There was nothing to regret in his past life; he had never loved, and therefore had no melancholy remembrance to make the present bitter. He had contracted neither

violent friendships nor violent enmities. Not from choice, but from the circumstances of his life, he had lived within himself, and his judgment of men and things had been derived, not from experience, but from reading and observation. He was large-minded, perhaps because no opportunity had presented itself to him of being otherwise. He had never been wronged—which frequently leads a generous nature to misanthropy; he had never wronged—which often leads to meanness many a nature capable of higher development. Thus, having escaped rocks upon which other men are wrecked, or soured, or embittered for life, he found himself a middle-aged man, the tenderest chords of whose nature had never yet been touched.

Sally's kisses thrilled him tenderly. He did not return them, nor did he exhibit any feeling, but every pulse of his being responded to this mark of affection.

"Daddy," said Sally.

"Yes, Sal."

"You're sure?"

"About next Monday? Oh, yes. We'll have the christening."

"I want to tell you somethink."

"Out with it."

"I've got two shillings."

"Ah."

"Saved up in my frock. Feel 'em."

Seth felt them.

"Mother give 'em to me before she went away. I may spend 'em, mayn't I?"

"For the christening?"

"For baby."

"Well, no; I should say not. Here's two shillings more; spend *them*, and keep yours."

"But I want to—I want to! It's my money, and I want to spend it on baby."

"You're an obstinate little sinner," said Seth, after some consideration, "but it appears to me that you've generally got a reason for what you do. So do it. You

can take my money as well, and spend it all if you like."

"We'll have a regular feast," said Sally gleefully.

Issuing forth the next morning, Sally commenced operations. The first acquaintance she met was Betsy Newbiggin. Betsy was pursuing her usual avocation of selling liquorice-water, at the rate of two teaspoonfuls for one pin. This industrious trader was a genius in her way, and displayed unusual qualifications for driving a good bargain. The bosom of her frock was half full of pins, and Betsy trotted about with her breastplate as proud as an Indian of his trophy of scalps, or as Aaron with his breastplate containing the Urim and Thummim. It is to be feared that Betsy was not an honest trader. She inaugurated the day's business by squeezing into the empty physic bottle a couple of pieces of Spanish liquorice, the amount of dirt from her fingers and nails which accompanied the delectable

morsels being considerable. Filling the bottle with water, Betsy gently shook it up and down, using a piece of paper for a cork, until the water assumed a light-brown clayey appearance. Thus prepared, she sought her playmates, and despoiled them, as Joshua despoiled the Anakims. For a crooked pin only one teaspoonful of the delectable beverage would she allow, and long and strong were the arguments used as to the righteous value of the pins offered by thirsty juveniles. When the negotiations were concluded, the buyer and seller would repair to a sequestered corner, where Betsy having secured her pin would pour out the liquorice-water (invariably short measure), and administer it, to the envy and admiration of a knot of hapless pinless youngsters, who would smack their lips in thirsty sympathy as the liquid glided down the throat of the fortunate purchaser. So supreme were these moments to the imbibers, that they generally closed their eyes

in ecstasy as Betsy thrust the teaspoon into their mouths. As fast as the bottle was emptied, it was refilled with water, and the flagrant adulteration was carried on until the barest taste of liquorice remained. It was worse than London milk—a large admission, redounding to the credit of Betsy, and arguing well for her worldly future.

Not often did Betsy Newbiggin meet with her match in the way of trade, but she met with it this morning, in Sally. Our little sallow-faced mother had the natural cravings of a daughter of Eve for sweet things, and she cast a longing glance at Betsy's bottle of liquorice-water. Betsy observing the glance, scented a customer, and she carelessly shook the bottle two or three times, and removing the paper cork applied it to her tongue with an air of great enjoyment.

"Is it nice, Betsy?" inquired Sally anxiously.

"I should rather think it was," replied Betsy, placing the bottle close to Sally's nose; "smell it. How many pins have yer got?"

Sally passed her hand over the bosom of her frock, and found never a pin.

"Trust us," pleaded Sally.

Betsy laughed scornfully, and made a feint of moving away to more profitable pastures.

"Stop a bit, Betsy," cried Sally, "I want to tell you somethink. I live at Mr. Dumbrick's, you know—me and my baby. And, oh! it's such a place! There never *was* nothink like it. It's full of the most beautifullest things as ever was, and there's a large glass river with all sorts of fish a-swimming about—wouldn't you like to see it?"

"I'd like to," said Betsy.

"It's better than a show, and Mr. Dumbrick he tells such stories—wouldn't you like to hear 'em?"

"I'd like to," repeated Betsy.

"Well, now," said Sally in unconscious imitation of Seth Dumbrick's manner of speaking, "I don't know. Perhaps I'll let you—perhaps I won't. Will you trust us two pins'orth?"

"Yes, I will, I will," exclaimed Betsy eagerly, and measured out four teaspoonfuls of the precious beverage, and gave full measure, mainly in consequence of Sally's watchful eyes being upon her. Long parleying took place thereafter between the cunning and wily Sally and the shrewd but in this instance over-reached Betsy, for before they parted, Sally had emptied every drop of liquorice-water in the bottle, and had besides wheedled Betsy out of twelve pins, to be returned at some remote and convenient period. But Betsy had her reward, in perspective, for she received the first invitation to the feast on Monday evening, in Seth's cellar, and she departed in a glow of triumph to boast of the invitation to

her acquaintance. There is no person in the world, however insignificant or humble, who does not build for himself a dunghill upon which he delights to crow, to the exaltment of himself and the depreciation of his neighbours.

By noon all Sally's invitations were issued by word of mouth; and the news spreading with amazing rapidity, the excitement among the juvenile population of Rosemary Lane became most intense. Those who were invited walked about with pride and superiority in their bearing, and those who were not were proportionately humbled and vexed. The circumstance that Seth Dumbrick, the hermit, the crab, had consented to receive in his cave a certain number of children, and to give them a feast, was really an event in the neighbourhood, and even some of the grown-up people said they would like to go to the party.

The curiosity and desire of Mrs. Preedy, a widow, became so inflamed that she paid

a visit to Seth in his stall, with the object of soliciting or wheedling him out of an invitation. The argument she used was that her child, Jane Preedy, who in the memory of the oldest inhabitant had never been known to wear a pair of boots or shoes which matched, and who had the reputation of being an incorrigible tomboy, was so shy in company that it would be a mercy to the little one if she were allowed the moral support of her mother on this auspicious occasion.

"It can't be done, ma'am," said Seth, with a convincing shake of the head, "at any price. No lady or gentleman over the age of twelve can be admitted, by order of the Lord Chancellor."

Awed by this information, and by no means certain that it was not given in earnest truth, Mrs. Preedy walked discomfitted away; but a woman is not easily beaten, and nothing increases the fire of her desires more than a man's opposition.

In an hour she returned. She was not easy in her mind. What *could* Mr. Dumbrick mean by his opposition to the presence of grown-up sensible persons at his party? If he would only allow *one* to be there! As a protection, or for the appearance of the thing! Such strange things would be said!

"I can bear it all, ma'am," was Seth's reply. "I wish you'd show me your back, and let me get on with my work."

This roused Mrs. Preedy's ire. There was something sinister at the bottom of it, she'd bet her existence! Mr. Dumbrick had some deep design. Strange things had been done before now in cellars! Perhaps he had skeletons and ghosts there, and wanted to frighten the children's lives out of 'em! It would be a mercy if they was ever seen again!

"My cellar *is* full of ghosts, ma'am," said Seth.

"I thought as much," observed Mrs.

Preedy more than ever perplexed "I hope you ain't done nothink very bad, Mr. Dumbrick. The ghosts are——"

"Ghosts of lost years, ma'am," rejoined Seth, with somewhat of melancholy gravity. "I never knew myself that they were there till a week or two ago."

"Dear me!" exclaimed Mrs. Preedy, with sympathetic curiosity. "And how did you find 'em out, Mr. Dumbrick?"

"I was looking," replied Seth, with grim pathos, "into the eyes of a little child—quite a baby indeed, ma'am—when they crept upon me unawares. Curious, wasn't it, that they should appear that way?"

"I should think it was," said Mrs. Preedy; "I can't make it out. It's like a riddle, Mr. Dumbrick. Then you'll let me come on Monday night?"

"You too want to creep upon me unawares. No, ma'am, I'll not let you come on Monday night. You'd scare away the ghosts."

"All the better," said Mrs. Preedy cheerfully. "A man of your time of life don't want to be bothered with such things."

"I'm not quite sure, ma'am. Do you ever read the Bible?"

"What do you take me for, Mr. Dumbrick? Of course I read my Bible, and believe in it. I'm a religious woman, I hope."

"I didn't ask you that. There's a part in it where a prophet—Moses it was—touches a rock, when all his people are dying o' thirst. The moment he touches it, out pours a spring of sweet fresh water, and the children of Israel drinks."

"Jews, they was?"

"Yes."

"Nasty creatures! I can't abear the sight of a Jew. I don't believe it's in the Bible."

"Oh, yes, it is."

"Well, I don't believe that part of it."

"It's a fable, o' course. I don't believe

it either; but there it is. Now that story —a pretty one, ma'am—applies in an odd way to me."

"You're the strangest creature, Mr. Dumbrick! I don't see how it *can* apply; but you're fond of puzzling a poor woman. I'll be sure to come on Monday night."

"You don't put your nose inside my place, ma'am—neither you nor any other grown-up person in Rosemary Lane."

Which caused Mrs. Preedy to retire in great dudgeon, ready to indorse any ill-natured judgment that might be passed upon Seth Dumbrick.

The eventful evening arrived, and Seth, sitting in his stall, received his guests, and passed them down to Sally. The first to arrive was Betsy Newbiggin; then followed Ann Taylor, Jimmy Platt, Jane Preedy (who had been in hiding all the day lest, at the last moment, her mother should prevent her going), Young Stumpy, and others, making in all a round dozen.

Seth's mode of procedure was brief and business-like, and may be thus described: Betsy Newbiggin, the first arrival, walked proudly and briskly to Seth's stall. To her dismay, Seth took no notice of her, and did not appear to see her.

"Please, Mr. Dumbrick," said Betsy timorously, all her boldness gone in presence of her distinguished host, his indifference also inspiring a doubt as to whether Sally had not been playing tricks with her.

"Ah," said Seth, raising his eyes, "well?"

"Please, Mr. Dumbrick, I've come to the party."

"Name?"

"Betsy Newbiggin, please, sir."

"You're the girl that sells liquorish-water?"

"Yes, please, sir."

"What does that mean on your frock?"

"It's a B and a N, Mr. Dumbrick. B for Betsy, N for Newbiggin."

Struck by an original idea, Betsy, when she was "doing herself up for the party," had stuck part of her capital of pins into the bosom of her frock in imperfect representation of the initials of her name. It was as good, in the first place, as the fashion of grand ladies in presenting their cards when paying visits (although this did not occur to Betsy, she not being versed in the usages of fashionable society); but Betsy—aware of the value of a good advertisement—did know that the device distinguished her as the only true and original vendor of liquorice-water in the neighbourhood. Besides, it prevented any other little girl passing herself off for her.

"Sally," called out Seth, bending towards the steps which led into the cellar, "here's Betsy Newbiggin. Is that right?"

"Yes, Daddy Dumbrick," called out Sally in reply; and then Seth hoisted the little girl in, and passed her down to Sally, who received her visitor with stately cordiality.

The process was repeated with all those invited, until the number was complete; when Seth put his shutters up, and joined the party.

The cellar presented a splendid appearance. Everything was polished up, the hearth was whitened, the stove was blackened. There was not a speck on the glass of the aquarium; but this latter attraction was covered with a blanket. Seth, who, during the day, had refused to come into the dwelling-room, knowing that Sally was busy, and wished to give him a surprise, gazed around with satisfaction. His eyes meeting Sally's, which were watching him anxiously, he patted her approvingly on the shoulder, which caused her to colour with pleasure. When Seth made his appearance among his guests, they were all demurely seated on two benches which Sally had found in the back yard, and cleaned for the occasion. They were a very respectable party indeed, and behaved themselves quite gen-

teelly. They were in holiday attire too, for, duly impressed with the importance of the event, they had taken pains to personally adorn themselves with any little oddment they could lay their hands on. True, that in some instances the will had to be taken for the deed; as in the case of Young Stumpy, the rents in whose garments would not admit of the entire concealment of his shirt, which peeped out in unwarrantable places, and who was much distressed by his companions slyly pulling at it, and further exposing him; and in the case of Jane Preedy, one of whose feet was buried in a very large old shoe, and the other squeezed into a boot too small to admit of lacing up. But for the matter of that, Sally Chester, if brought before a jury, would have been found guilty of rents, tatters, and incongruities in her attire; so busy had she been that—without inquiring as to whether she had the means—she had no time to make herself smart. On the table were displayed

threepennyworth of oranges cut into very small pieces, threepennyworth of whitey-brown seedcakes, threepennyworth of the delectable cake known as the jumble, and threepennyworth of expressionless men and women and blatant cocks and hens fashioned out of the native gingerbread of the neighbourhood. Upon this splendid feast the eyes of the company were eagerly fixed, wandering occasionally away to the dark corners of the cellar and to the blanket which concealed the fish in the aquarium.

"Where's baby, Sally?" asked Seth.

"Not yet, please," said Sally imploringly. "May we commence, Daddy?"

"Yes."

The entertainment was opened by the drawing up of the curtain, or rather by the withdrawal of the blanket from the aquarium, and the sudden and brilliant display of fish swimming about caused a chorus of Oh's! of all shapes and sizes to issue from the throats of the delighted guests. Entering

at once into the humour of the affair, Seth Dumbrick constituted himself showman, and proceeded to point out the different fish to the audience, who thronged around the lecturer, and listened open-mouthed to the wonderful things he told them. He took advantage, it must be confessed, of the limited knowledge of his hearers, and imposed upon them as the veriest mountebank would have done. Marvellous were the qualities of the water-beetles; dreadful were the stories he told of the voracious silver pike, saying how fortunate it was that there was not room for them to grow in the aquarium, or there was no telling what would occur; the gold and silver fish were real gold and silver—"Do you think I'd keep sham ones?" he asked, receiving vociferous vindication of his genuineness in the answers, "In course not, Mr. Dumbrick;" "Not you, Mr. Dumbrick;"—and as for the salamanders, which they gazed upon with a kind of horrible fascination, he

explained how that fire wouldn't burn them, and expressed his opinion—with downward pointing finger—that they come from the place where wicked boys and girls went to, unless they saw the error of their ways, and repented in good time. So impressed with gloomy forebodings were the guests — all of whom, according to the oft-repeated testimony of their nearest relations, were as bad as bad could be—at this peroration to Seth Dumbrick's discourse, that it was found necessary to revive their sinking spirits. This was successfully accomplished by a circulation of the oranges and cakes, after discussing a portion of which they became the most defiant of young sinners, and figuratively snapped their fingers at fate. Then the principal feature of the evening was heralded by Sally, who, retiring into the recess which had been partitioned off for her sleeping apartment, returned in triumph with baby.

Holding Sally by the hand, she walked in like a little queen.

Of Sally's four shillings, one had been spent on the pleasures of the table; the remaining three had been expended on the child's dress. Heaven only knows what had influenced Sally in her whim, but from the moment she had obtained Seth Dumbrick's permission to hold the feast, she had run about from shop to shop, and street to street, hunting up cheap little bits of finery with which to deck her treasure for the important occasion. Small remnants of silk, bits of ribbon, faded artificial flowers, whatever her eye lighted on in rag and second-hand clothes' shops in the way of colour, Sally had purchased, cheapening and bargaining for them with the zeal and tact of a grown-up woman. The result was a great heap of odds and ends, which Sally had washed, and ironed, and pieced, and patched, with so much industry and ingenuity that her treasure-baby looked like a May-day Queen or an oddly assorted rainbow. There was no harmony of design in the fashioning

or arrangement of the dress, but the general effect was so pretty and unexpected, and the child's face, flushed with pleasure and excitement, was so beautiful, that her appearance in the cellar was like the revelation of a bright cloud, and Seth Dumbrick held his breath for a moment or two in wonder and admiration. The guests clapped their hands in unrestrained delight, and the child, standing in the midst of her admiring audience, received their applause with perfect grace—as though she was used to this sort of thing, and it was naturally her due. There was a rosy glow in her fair cheeks, her flaxen hair hung upon her shoulders like golden silk, her blue eyes sparkled with beauty. Sally stood by her side, like a little sallow gipsy. Seth drew the two children aside, and lifted them on his knees.

"Doesn't she look like an angel?" inquired Sally rapturously.

"It's such a picture as I never expected

to see in my cellar. Sally, you're a little wonder."

"No, no," protested Sally; "she is. I ain't nobody. That's the way I saw her in my dream. You've got to give her a name, you know."

"It's a puzzle, Sally. There's no name I'm acquainted with that would match her."

"But you've got to do it."

"Didn't Pharer say anything about it?"

Sally considered.

"Pharer's a king. She's good enough to be a queen."

"We've got one Queen, Sal, and those that have seen her say she's pretty, too. There's princesses and duchesses——"

"A duchess, a duchess!" cried Sally, clapping her hands. "If she can't be a queen, make her a duchess!"

"So be it, Sally. A duchess 'll be better than baby, when she grows up. So we'll call her a duchess. The Duchess of Rosemary Lane."

Sally slid off his knees, and brought a cup of water.

"You must sprinkle her, you know. That's the way. Now no one can't call her nothing else."

"Ladies and gentlemen," said Seth, addressing the company with mock dignity, "allow me to present to you the Duchess of Rosemary Lane."

CHAPTER XIV.

SETH DUMBRICK MAKES A BARGAIN WITH THE LOVELY LAD.

Thus, after having unconsciously passed through peril and danger, the heroine of this story may be said to have found a place in the world. Lowly indeed was her home —as low as a grave; but as from the grave, where the lifeless clay rots and moulders, the spirit rises to purer space, so doubtless will the Duchess of Rosemary Lane find means to rise, in her mortal state, to a higher rung in the ladder of life than the humble cellar of Seth Dumbrick. At present she is helpless, dependent on strangers for food and shelter—thrown into the arms

of charity (not, happily for her, cold as charity generally is), and saved from early suffering by the cunning and devotion of a child but two or three years older than herself.

Eccentric characters are always notabilities in poor neighbourhoods, and Seth Dumbrick was not an exception to the rule. The accounts related by the children of the feast given by him in our heroine's honour were listened to with credulous admiration by the grown-up residents of Rosemary Lane. Their organs of wonder were sensibly tickled by the not-over-veracious chronicles, in which the youthful imagination was drawn upon with skilful effect. Had the exaggerated accounts been even more exaggerated than they were, they would have been readily accepted, for ignorance is always ready to extend its faith to the marvellous and unknown.

From this evening Seth's fame increased, and that of the Duchess of Rosemary Lane

was firmly established. The gossips were firmly convinced that a thrilling mystery was connected with the child's birth and her introduction into Rosemary Lane, and artful plots and schemes were devised to wring it from Seth Dumbrick—without avail; for the sufficient reason, which he set forth and they utterly discredited, that he himself was ignorant of the child's antecedents. But although it was in the highest degree tantalising not to be made participators in so interesting a mystery, it was something to be associated with it, and to have it moving amongst them. To have thrown discredit upon it would have robbed it of much of its attractiveness, and thus the child's claim to the title of Duchess was willingly admitted. It conferred distinction upon the neighbourhood, and, apart from that consideration, it was pretty and fantastic, and took the fancy of the humble folk. Her position as the aristocratic head of Rosemary Lane being, therefore, indisputably recognised, the

Duchess at once assumed her proper position in society.

She held her court in the narrow byways and thoroughfares of the district, and no monarch ever had a more devoted and admiring following. All the children in and about Rosemary Lane walked in her train, and wherever she sat and made her throne, in mud-gutter or on window-sill, she was surrounded by flatterers, aping their betters in a short-sighted, wrong-headed fashion; for from this little queen of the humble streets, nothing was to be gained but smiles and thanks. Which renders apparent the fact that, although, as has been demonstrated, these children were to some extent worldly, they were not yet sufficiently wise to know that the heart is a good-enough mint in its way, but that its coinage is scarcely available for material uses.

It was by her beauty, and the pride which her worshipper, Sally Chester, took in her, that her position was chiefly maintained.

Sally was scarcely ever seen with a clean face; the Duchess of Rosemary Lane was scarcely ever seen with a dirty one. Sally was never without rents in her clothes and holes in her stockings; the Duchess was invariably a picture of neatness. Sally's hair hung always in wild disorder about her thin, sallow face; the Duchess's was always carefully combed and smoothed. "A duchess!" exclaimed many a woman; "upon my word, she looks like one!" In two or three conspicuous points she was so far above her contemporaries that those alone would have raised her to a position of importance among them. One relates to her hands, another to her feet. It was the fashion with many of the youngsters to bite their nails; she never did. Her little plump fingers were generally white and clean, and her nails were seldom, if ever, in mourning. And Seth Dumbrick took care of her feet. It became his whim to make for his new charge the prettiest boots and shoes, which

were at once the envy and admiration of her playmates, and constant attention being called to her superiority in these matters, she grew proud of herself because of them, and doubtless in her child-mind gave herself full and sole credit for their possession. She received all the court paid to her, all the flatteries of her worshippers, all the adoration which Sally poured upon her, with queenly composure. There are natures which yearn for love, and are unhappy without it, and yet which bestow but little; there are others with a wondrous capacity for bestowing love, and whose sweetest pleasure it is to lavish affection on an endeared object. Such a nature as the latter Sally possessed, and it had found its idol.

But had not the Duchess of Rosemary Lane been distinguished and made conspicuous by circumstances apart from and not dependent upon herself, she would have claimed attention from certain qualities peculiarly her own. In conjunction with

her beauty, she had, when she was puzzled or pleased, quaint tricks of expression indescribably winning, and when no actual passion or emotion lighted up her features and they were in repose, she looked so sweet and pure that all hearts were instinctively attracted towards her.

Herein lies matter worthy of brief comment. Place by the road-side two girl-children of the same age and station in life. One is pale, deformed, ill-featured, repulsive; the other is bright-eyed, ruddy-cheeked, well-formed, handsome. This fortunate creature receives all the sympathetic admiration of the passers-by; they pat her on the head, pinch her cheek, give her cakes and sweet words: while the unfortunate one stands miserably by, not only neglected, but shunned—stands, biting her nails, with dark thoughts brooding in her mind. Which of these two more demands kindness, has the greater right to it, more needs it, more yearns for it? The

one is a flower growing in rich earth, with the sun shining on it, with the dew glistening on its leaves; the other is a weed growing in barren soil, and thirsting for the refreshing showers which never descend to bless it. Yet to the cold and philosophic mind it may be a matter for doubt which is the more fortunate of the two. Beauty is ofttimes a dangerous possession.

Seth Dumbrick, when he adopted the girls, had done so with a full intention to perform his duty by them. He was prepared for difficulties which—having had no experience of children—it was not in his power to define; but he placed great trust in Sally, and was in no wise daunted by the responsibility he had taken upon himself. There was more than one difficulty, however, for which he was utterly unprepared, and the first of these presented itself in the person of Mrs. Chester's "lovely lad" Ned.

Upon his mother's departure to her

new sphere of duties, this estimable young gentleman found himself without a home; whereupon he began, after the usual custom with such natures, to repine bitterly at fate because of his unfortunate lot. But fate is an insensible antagonist, and, repine at it as you will, you cannot make it feel. Ned Chester cast about for some more vulnerable foe, and by a curious process of reasoning selected Seth Dumbrick. It would be difficult, and too tedious, to minutely describe the process which caused him to regard Seth Dumbrick in the light of an enemy. It will be sufficient for the purpose to state that both his sister Sally and the Duchess of Rosemary Lane played important parts in the belief, and that it led him to the opinion that, in adopting them, Seth Dumbrick had inflicted a distinct injury upon him. With this injury rankling in his mind, he, some three months after his mother's departure, presented himself at Seth Dum-

brick's stall. He had done so before, but with a sufficient knowledge of Ned Chester's character, derived partly from Sally's words and partly from his own observation, Seth had declined to converse with him, and had treated him with studied coldness and disdain — which deepened the injury under which Ned Chester suffered. On this occasion Seth Dumbrick was not the first to speak. He saw that Ned Chester was not sober, and he had no desire to quarrel with him.

"Well, you Dumbrick!" exclaimed Ned.

Seth Dumbrick merely smiled; the most irritating answer he could have made.

"You Dumbrick, do you hear?" demanded Ned.

"Oh, yes, I hear," quietly replied Seth. "What do you want?"

"My sister."

"Sally!" called Seth Dumbrick.

"Here's your brother wants to see you."

Sally came up from the cellar, accompanied by the Duchess. They stood by Seth's side, who proceeded with his work in silence. Ned Chester was thus taken at a disadvantage. His business was to pick a quarrel with Seth Dumbrick, and he could find nothing particular to say to Sally, who gazed at him with fear and aversion. He gave her a wrathful look in return, and made as though he would clutch her. Seth, an attentive observer of every look and movement, interposed his arm.

"What's that for?" cried Ned Chester, fancying that he saw his opportunity.

Seth Dumbrick looked at his bare arm contemplatively, as though that was the subject upon which Ned Chester desired information. His shirt-sleeves were tucked up to his shoulders, and his muscles made no mean display.

"What's that for?" he echoed, holding out his arm, and straightening it, so that his clenched fist almost touched the young man's face.

Ned Chester started back with an exclamation of alarm; he was not a brave man.

"Are you going to hit me?" he cried.

"No," said Seth Dumbrick; "there's no call to hit you, I take it. I thought you asked what my arm was for. Well, it's for work. Yours is for play, I suppose. But as my arm *has* come into the conversation, let me tell you that it's an arm as can take its own part. It's done it in its time, thougn it's many a year ago since it struck anything more sensible than leather."

The hint was too plain to be mistaken. Ned Chester turned to Sally.

"Sally," he whined, "haven't you got something to say to your poor brother?"

Sally considered for a moment, and made

up her mind once and for all, if the tone in which she spoke could be taken as an indication.

"No," she said, "I ain't got nothink to say, and I don't want to have nothink to do with you."

"By which," added Seth Dumbrick, as a strong endorsement, "*I* should understand, if I was in your place, that my room would be better than my company."

"You little viper!" exclaimed Ned Chester wrathfully, addressing his sister, and would have continued but that Seth interrupted him with,

"Stop, stop; this young lady's under my protection. If she doesn't want to to say anything to you, you shan't make her. Go down, Sally, if you don't care to stop."

Sally, glad to escape, was about to obey, when the Duchess, who had not moved from Sally's side during the conversation,

plucked Seth Dumbrick's shirt-sleeve. Seth peered inquisitively at her.

"Don't hurt him," lisped the child.

A gleam of satisfaction came into Ned Chester's eyes.

"No, no, Duchess," said Seth good-humouredly, "I'll not hurt him. Nobody wants to do anything to him one way or another. Go down with Sally."

But before the Duchess obeyed, she held out her hand to Ned.

"Good-bye," she said.

Ned seized her hand and kissed it.

"Good-bye," he said, with a triumphant glance at Seth; "there's one at all events with a heart in her bosom."

The whining tone in which he spoke was so distasteful to Seth Dumbrick that he averted his eyes from the lovely lad, and presently, when he looked up, he saw that he was alone. At the same time he observed that a pair of boots which he had newly mended was missing. For a moment

he thought of pursuing the thief, but he relinquished his intention, and continued his work, with a frown on his face.

"Sally," he said, that night, when the shutters were up, "that brother of yours is a bad lot."

Sally nodded an emphatic assent.

"You're not over-fond of him."

"I've got nothink to be fond on him for," was Sally's rejoinder. "But mother she jist worships him, she does."

"It would make her sorry to hear that he'd got into any new trouble — eh, Sally?"

"It'd jist worrit the life out of her— and I'd be sorry, too."

"Seen Pharer lately?"

"No, Daddy," replied Sally nervously.

"Pharer never said anything to you about your brother, did he?"

"No, Daddy Dumbrick, never."

"Him!" proceeded Seth, getting down the Bible from which he was teaching Sally

to read; "If Pharer was to come to you in a trance, and was to tell you that Ned Chester was going away, and was never coming back again, I should say that, as a spirit, he'd beat Joanna's into fits; and if it come true—which it'd be sure to, if Pharer said as much—eh?"

"Oh, yes," cried Sally; "sure to—sure to!"

"And if it come true," concluded Seth thoughtfully, "it'd be as welcome to me as the best week's work I've ever done in my life."

But Sally was too shrewd to risk her reputation upon chance, and with reference to this subject she did not introduce Pharaoh into the conversation for many weeks. During this interval, the Duchess behaved herself in a manner which occasioned her guardian and Sally much anxiety. Sally, running home one day, after having been out with the Duchess for two or three

hours, rushed down the cellar, and up again, in terror and distress.

"Oh, oh!" she cried, beating her hands together. "The Duchess! The Duchess!"

"What about her?" cried Seth, starting up in alarm.

"She's lost — she's lost! she's been kidnapped by the gipsies! I can't find her nowhere."

Seth ran at once into the streets, and Sally ran after him, with the tears running down her dirty face; but although they hunted high and low, and inquired at the police-station for a lost child, they could discover no trace of the Duchess. In a very despondent frame of mind, Seth retraced his steps to his stall, Sally walking heart-broken by his side.

"It's as bad," he murmured ruefully, "as being a father in reality. I couldn't feel it more if I *was* her father. Sally,

if the Duchess is lost, and we can't find her, we'll emigrate."

This offered no consolation to Sally, whose tears flowed more freely at the melancholy tone in which Seth spoke.

"There's never any gipsies about this neighbourhood," continued Seth, more gloomily; "it's somebody as has taken a fancy to the little one—being so pretty—that's stolen her. But I'll spend every penny I've got—it ain't much, Sal—to find her."

"Perhaps," whispered Sally, with her heart palpitating wildly. "Perhaps she's drownded."

Which, in the case of death by accident or premeditation, was the fashionable mode in the surrounding locality.

The suggestion made Seth shiver, and he and Sally proceeded home in silence.

"I'll work no more to-day," he said, when he reached the stall; "I'll not sleep to-night without finding her, if she *is*

to be found. Here, take these things downstairs."

But as with feverish haste he gathered together his tools, he heard Sally, who by that time had entered the cellar, scream loudly and violently.

"Save my soul!" he exclaimed, as he scrambled down the stairs; "that's to say, if I've got a soul to be saved,—what's the matter now?"

He was not long in doubt. Sitting very contentedly on the ground, with two half-eaten apples and some very sticky sweet-stuff in her lap, was the cause of all their anxiety, and Sally was crying and laughing over her. The Duchess's face and mouth were smeared with sweet particles, and she bore the surfeited appearance of having much indulged. She laughed at Seth as he entered, and would have clapped her hands but that they held portions of the banquet of which she had been so freely partaking. Seth heaved a great sigh of relief.

Already had he learned to love the child very deeply. When love, after a life which has been barren of it, comes for the first time to a man as old as Seth—whether it be love for a child or for a woman—it is strong and abiding. Seth's heart, which was as heavy as lead, grew as light as the proverbial feather, and a glad smile came to his lips.

"You little runaway! you little truant!" he said, lifting the Duchess to his lap, and kissing her sticky lips; "where have you been hiding yourself?"

It would have been hard to tell which of the three was the most delighted—he, or Sally, or the Duchess of Rosemary Lane. They all laughed and crowed together. Presently Seth comported himself more gravely.

"Come, my beauty," he said in a serious tone, "where have you been hiding?"

The Duchess became as grave and serious as her interrogator.

"I mustn't tell," she answered.

"Ah, but you must," persisted Seth; "we want to know, so that the next time it happens we may be able to find you."

"No, no," laughingly crowed the child; "I mustn't tell—I mustn't tell."

And that was all they could extract from her, with all their questioning and coaxing. Where had she been to? She mustn't tell. Who had given her the fruit and sweets? She mustn't tell. The only satisfaction they obtained from her was upon their asking if she had been told not to tell, and she answered, with a sly laugh, Yes. With this they were fain to rest content.

But when she was abed and asleep, Seth and Sally interchanged a grave confidence, to the effect that the Duchess must be carefully looked after. Sally needed no prompting. She had fully made up her mind to watch her precious charge with

increased care and vigilance. Sharp as she was, however, the Duchess outwitted her. Within a week she was missing again. But Sally was more fortunate in her inquiries on this occasion. Meeting Betsy Newbiggin, she purchased from that industrious trader, for five pins and a farthing, the information that the Duchess of Rosemary Lane and Sally's brother were seen walking along hand-in-hand a quarter of an hour ago, in the direction of Ned Chester's lodging. Sally knew where her brother lived, and she ran swiftly to the place. The room occupied by her brother was at the top of the house; and when Sally reached the landing, she found the door closed upon her. Peeping through the keyhole, she saw the Duchess sitting on the bed, and Ned Chester sitting by her feeding her with sweetstuff. Sally was too frightened to go in; she knew the disposition of her brother, and she was fearful of driving him to the extreme measure

of running away altogether with the Duchess—for that dreaded contingency was in her mind. With an intense concentration of her sense of hearing, Sally managed to hear what passed between the child and the man. It was simple enough, and consisted chiefly of repetitions of the lovely lad's misfortunes, of his hard fate, and of the cruél way in which people oppressed him, to all of which the Duchess listened with an air of apathetic acquiescence. Something else also he said. He hated Seth Dumbrick; he hated Sally; he hated everything. When Sally heard his expressions of unmeaning hatred towards herself and her protector, she listened in an agony of agitation for some vindication from the Duchess: none reached her ears; but upon placing her eye to the keyhole, it brought a sweet sense of satisfaction to her to observe that a mournful expression was clouding the child's bright face.

"But never mind them," said Ned Chester; "you love me, don't you?"

"Yes, yes," replied the Duchess; "I love you."

"And I love you. Kiss me, Duchess. There won't be many prettier faces than yours when you grow up, and I'll love you more then than I do now. And you will love me more, won't you?"

"Yes, if you give me apples and sweet-stuff. I love *them*."

"You shall have everything you ask for, Duchess; mind that—everything. I'm not rich now, but I shall be then; and you shall have carriages and horses——"

"Yes, yes," cried the Duchess, clapping her hands; "I'll love you—I'll love you!"

"And when you are old enough, you will be my little wife?"

"Yes, yes, I will."

"So we'll kiss on it, and it's a bargain."

After the embrace, a movement on the part of her brother, which indicated that he

was about to leave the room, caused Sally to beat a rapid retreat downstairs, where, in the street, she waited for the Duchess to come out. The child came, holding Ned Chester by the hand, and Sally followed them unobserved until her brother left the Duchess with some playmates. Sally did not acquaint Seth Dumbrick with her discovery; but she, within an hour, introduced the subject in a manner familiar to them both.

"I want to tell you. Daddy Dumbrick, Pharer come again."

"I thought he would, Sal. Pharer's rising as a spirit. Get straight to what he said."

"He said, said Pharer, the Duchess has been playing truant."

"Wide-awake old king! Go on, Sal."

"But 'taint her fault, said Pharer; she's been seducted away."

"She's been what?"

"Seducted away. Now, said Pharer, you'll miss her agin soon."

"When?"

"Pharer didn't say. You'll miss her agin soon, he said. There's somebody as is fond on her, and as hates you and Daddy Dumbrick and everybody but the Duchess. So look out."

"We will. That wasn't all, Sal."

"No. Said Pharer, the next time you miss her, tell Daddy Dumbrick to go to No. 8, Lemon Street, to the top of the house on the third floor, and there he'll find her."

Seth stared at Sally. "That's all?"

"That's all."

"Did Pharer say who lives there?"

"No."

"And," said Seth, placing his hand kindly on Sally's head, "you don't want to tell?"

"No; for if anythink happened to him through me, mother would never, never speak to me agin."

"All right, Sal. I can guess what you don't want to tell. The next time you can't

find the Duchess, you come to me; I'll soon settle matters."

The opportunity occurred very soon, and was brought about probably by Sally, who relaxed her watch so that Seth could make the discovery for himself. Taking Sally with him, Seth proceeded to the house, and found Ned Chester entertaining the child, to whom he had taken so strange a liking. He was charming the Duchess's soul with his tin whistle; and Seth, pausing on the stairs, listened in wonder to the melodious sounds produced by the drunken vagrant. He was ignorant of Ned Chester's accomplishments in the musical way, and was only made acquainted with Ned's possession of so rare a talent by Sally exclaiming,

"There he is!"

"That's never your brother, Sal," observed Seth.

"Yes, it is; that's how he lives. Don't he play beautifully?"

Seth, without replying, entered the room, and opened the battle at once.

"Take her home," he said, passing the Duchess to Sally; "your brother and I are going to talk a bit. Don't be afraid, Sal; we sha'n't fight—at least I sha'n't, and I don't think he's got pluck enough. Now," he continued, when the children were gone, "let's make short work of this. What do you mean by tricking my child away day after day in this fashion?"

"Your child!" sneered Ned. "She's as much mine as yours; I love her as much."

"I'll not question that. If you love her for her good, it's a bit of light in you that I ain't sorry to see. But the child's mine, so far as a poor little castaway who's been thrown on the world in the way she's been can be said to be anybody's. And I mean to keep her, and to put a stop to any nonsense on your part. Understand that."

"I'm not good enough for the little

beauty, I shouldn't wonder to hear you say. Perhaps you can prove that you're better company than me."

"I can. In the first place, you are a drunken sot, which I am not. Stop. Keep your passion in for a minute, and then boil over if you like, and think it wise. In the second place, you are a thief, which I am not."

"And in no place at all," cried Ned Chester, both fearful and furious, "you are a liar, which I am not."

"I can prove what I say, and will, to the magistrates, if you want me to. When you came to my stall a little while ago you stole a pair of boots."

"That's well trumped up. To be true, you must have found it out at the time. It's not a good move of yours."

"I did find it out at the time; and I went two days afterwards to the pawnbroker's where you pledged them, and made certain. The pawnbroker 'll swear to you;

I'll swear to the boots. It's a Botany Bay job, as clear as sunlight. You're fiddling with your fingers in your waistcoat pocket. You've got the ticket there. What do you say to that now, for a move?"

"Why," stammered Ned, growing very white about the lips; he saw that Seth Dumbrick had him in his power, "can't a man buy a pawn-ticket, and—and——"

"It will be best for me to do the talking, Ned Chester. I shall get along better than you. The reason that I didn't come straight after you at the time was that I thought of the mother, who loves you. That's why I spared you then; for your mother's sake, not for your own. I suspect it's out of spite against me that you are trying to trick the little Duchess from me and Sally——"

"No," interrupted Ned Chester, the colour coming into his face again; "it's chiefly out of love for her. Look here," he cried, bursting into tears, "I can't tell you what it is that makes me so fond of her, but

I'm a different man when she's with me than when she's not. I've spent my last penny on her this very day, and I don't know what to do for a drink. She's got a face like an angel, and—and——"

But his voice trailed off here, and he paused, as much amazed himself at his involuntary outburst as was Seth Dumbrick, who had listened to it without interruption.

"You're not the only man," said Seth, after a pause, "who's got that sort of feeling towards the child. Now, mind. I'm speaking to you calm and reasonable, first for your mother's sake, next for Sally's; I'm old enough to be your father, and it's for their sakes not for your own, that I tell you you're on the wrong track. You go on drinking for another two or three years as you've been doing the last two or three, and if I'm any judge of appearances, you'll wake up one fine morning and find yourself in a madhouse—which wouldn't matter a bit so long as your mother didn't know,

for you're nothing as you are but a lump o' mischief. Well, I love that child in a way that makes me surprised at myself, and I mean to stand by her through life, and I don't mean to see her wronged. I ain't given to sentiment, and I ain't given to passion; but you may believe every word I'm speaking. That child's wound her way into my heart, and there she is, and there she'll be as long as I live. That's how it is, you see, and my voice ain't very loud in the saying of it. Well, feeling like that towards her, it ain't likely that I'm going to let you step in between us, and poison her against me and Sally—who's an angel, too, in her way, let me tell you. How one mother could have two such different shoots as you and Sally, is beyond me—as all nature is. But that's not to the point. You've opened your mind to me, and I've opened mine to you. I'll open it farther. You trick my child away again, you get her up here

again, and steal her from Sally, whose apple of her eyes she is, and I'll have you sent across the water for stealing them boots from my stall. If I don't, may I be struck down dead where I stand! There—that's the first strong oath I've taken since I was a young man, when I used to swear a bit. Not that I believe in such an oath, mind you—only it's a way of speaking as you'll understand. Now I've got a proposition to make to you; and before I make it I'll alter something that I've said, for you're not the sort of man whose word I'd trust. Not alone will I have you sent to Botany Bay if you play any more tricks with the Duchess, but I'll have you sent if you don't go away from this neighbourhood before the week's out, and I'll have you sent if you ever show your face in it again. What do you say to that?"

Stupefied by fear, and entirely dominated by the calm, strong will of Seth Dumbrick, Ned Chester found nothing to say to it, and

waited in impotent rage for what was to follow.

"Now for my proposition. You've got a lucky mole on your forehead——"

Ned Chester with a bewildered air raised his hand to the hitherto luckless possession.

"—And that mole's going to lead you to fortune, your mother's told me. What if I show you the way?" Seth paused awhile to allow the words to sink into Ned's mind. "I can, and here it is." He took a piece of a newspaper from his pocket. "Here's an account of gold, in great lumps, being found in Australia. If you was there with your mole, you'd be the luckiest man in the mines."

Ned Chester jumped up in excitement.

"Of course I should. If I was there! But how to get there! A poor beggar like me!" He pulled out the lining of his empty pockets, with a distracted air.

"There's ships going away from the Docks every week for the mines. Go, and

get shipped as a sailor. You ain't one, I know, but you can tell lies. If not as a sailor, as something else. There's the gold waiting for you to pick it up. If a matter of three pound 'll get you off, I've got that much saved, and you shall have it. I'll give it to get rid of you, and for the sake of your mother and Sally——"

"And the Duchess," added Ned, somewhat maliciously.

"And the Duchess; you're right; so that you sha'n't worry the life out of us. I don't intend to say another word but this. When you come to me and say you're going, I'll give you the three pound the day the ship sails out of the Docks. And if you ain't gone in less than a fortnight—well, just you imagine that I'm taking that oath over again—I'll have the handcuffs put on you and make an end of you."

Before the fortnight had passed, Seth Dumbrick, bidding Sally keep at home with the Duchess, and not stir out till he re-

turned, went away in the early morning and did not make his appearance till the evening. He was in high spirits. With the Duchess on his lap, he said in a cheerful voice to Sally,

"Sally, if you was to have a trance to-night, and Pharer was to come to you and say that your brother had gone over the water and was never coming back, it 'ud be the truest words that Pharer ever spoke since the time he was done up in a bundle, and became a spirit. It's true, Sal. The Duchess is all ours now."

CHAPTER XV.

THE DUCHESS BEGINS TO GIVE TROUBLE.

It was to Seth Dumbrick a pleasure, as well as a matter of conscientious duty, to fulfil the promise he gave to Mrs. Chester concerning her daughter's education, and he played the part of schoolmaster with faithfulness and regularity. Scarcely an evening passed but instruction was given to Sally, who, quick in this as in other things, proved herself the aptest of scholars. Before she had been two years in her new home Sally could read tolerably well, and could write, after a fashion; and it was about this time that the education of the Duchess of Rosemary Lane was commenced. It will be admitted that no better book

than the Bible—which may be said to be the Alpha and Omega of Seth's curriculum—could have been selected as the medium for imparting to the youthful mind sound ideas on morality and the proper conduct of life; and had there been no marked singularity in the mode of treatment adopted by their instructor, the children might have been regarded as peculiarly fortunate in the selection. But Seth had his own ideas, and he promulgated them to his limited and acquiescent audience, without speculating on the effect they might produce on a mental soil up to this point fallow and untilled. Commencing with Sally at the very beginning of things—the Creation—he travelled with her through Genesis, and so confounded her with the unpronounceable names of the generations of men, that she timidly entered a protest against them, saying they hurt her mouth; which, being taken in good part by her schoolmaster, induced him of an evening to open the Bible at random,

and impart instruction from any chapter he chanced to light upon; unless it happened to be genealogical, when, after a verse or two — which vexed his soul as much as that of his pupil—he would abandon it, and try again. So that the biblical knowledge gained by the children in the course of their studies was necessarily somewhat mixed. But even this knowledge was not allowed to sink into their minds in its undefiled state. Seth adulterated it with his comments and opinions, as other dogmatists would have done with such an opportunity before them. He put his own interpretation upon this and that, and it was accepted unhesitatingly and without question. Treating the stories as though they were stories in an ordinary book, he robbed the Bible of its spiritual halo. This was wise; that was pretty; nothing was inspired. Seth's nature was tender and compassionate in a human way, but his religious principles—using the phrase in its

common acceptation—would have shocked the orthodox church-goer. For the Old Testament, although he professed to like some of the stories and to admire its worldly wisdom, he had not a particle of reverence. When he spoke of it to the children and made his comments, he was as serious as though he were arguing with sages, and it did not trouble him that his explanations and the imagery he used were far above their comprehension. He was sufficiently satisfied to have them sitting silently before him while he expounded, and he laughed when the buzzing of words in their ears caused them to nod off. Sally, aware that he derived pleasure in hearing himself speak, was the more attentive listener of the two, and frequently simulated an interest which she did not feel; often indeed when, while he dilated upon ancient prophets and Jewish kings, her thoughts were running upon patched frocks and pinafores, and holes in stockings, and the thousand-and-one other domestic

worries with which her young life was constantly filled.

She would have been content to have gone on in this way all the years of her life; not so the Duchess. Her nature was one which yearned for excitement; glitter and action were what best pleased her, and she was happier in the streets than in the home Seth Dumbrick had given her. As she grew, her beauty ripened, and, with every penny which Sally could beg or borrow or earn spent upon her personal adornment, she moved among the usually sad streets and their residents like a bright flower; and as she grew and bloomed, those among whom she spent her days became prouder and prouder of her. Even the grown-up people petted and flattered her, and spread her fame into other streets and other neighbourhoods which could not boast of a Duchess. She was no trouble to her guardian, except that she developed the propensity of wandering away, and ab-

senting herself for hours, to the distress and misery of Sally, who was never happy when her idol was out of her sight. Remonstrance was of no avail; she could not and would not be cured of her truant-playing proclivities. On one occasion Seth threatened to lock her up if she misbehaved again. The following day she slipped from Sally's side, and was not found until night set in. "I don't want to go home," she said rebelliously to Sally, who was crying over her; "I won't be locked up." And nothing would pacify her until Seth solemnly promised her that he would never lock her up. Then she kissed him, and said as she nestled in his arms, "Now you're good, and I love you." These moments were too sweet to be jeopardised, and Seth Dumbrick was fairly conquered. It never occurred to him that there was a dangerous want in the child's life, the want of womanly companionship and womanly counsel and tenderness. He had no idea of the insensisble influence for good of

such an association. The child had Sally, and Sally in Seth's eyes, was worth a thousand women; and besides, the lonely life he himself had led and knew to be ordinarily happy—a life wherein womanly association had never found a place and never formed itself into a want—precluded the possibility of such a thought causing him disturbance.

So things went on until the Duchess of Rosemary Lane was seven years of age, when an event occurred which brought sorrow into Seth Dumbrick's household. The child suddenly sickened and fell ill.

It was Sally's custom to rise early, immediately after Seth himself had risen and had left the cellar, dressing herself quietly, so as not to disturb her darling, who was generally asleep. Sally, after gently and tenderly kissing the Duchess's pretty face, busied herself with putting the place in order, lighting the fire, and preparing the breakfast. Then she would wake the Duchess, assist her to dress, and, break-

fast being over, would proceed cheerfully with her household duties. Going to the child's bedside on this morning, Sally found her languid and weak, and disinclined to rise. Sally ran in alarm to her guardian.

"I think the Duchess is ill," she said, with quivering lips.

Seth immediately accompanied her to the child's bedside.

"Aren't you well, Duchess?" he inquired.

The Duchess opened her eyes, looked vacantly at him, and turned on her side.

"Best let her keep a-bed," said Seth, placing his hand on the Duchess's forehead, which was hot and dry; "she's caught cold maybe; she'll be all right to-morrow."

Among the Duchess's acquaintances in Rosemary Lane was a cousin of Betsy Newbiggin, the vendor of liquorice-water. He was a lad of about the same age as the Duchess, and between the two a friendship warmer than ordinary had sprung up. A

week before the indisposition of the Duchess, Betsy Newbiggin, hailing her, informed her that cousin Bob was "took bad," and could not get out of bed; and the following day Betsy Newbiggin said that Cousin Bob was "took worse, and would the Duchess go and see him?" Apart from the circumstance that the Duchess was fond of Bob, the opportunity of going to see somebody who was ill a-bed was too alluring to be neglected, and the Duchess and Betsy went to Bob's house, and were admitted to the sick chamber.

"Hush!" said the mother to the Duchess. "Don't make a noise. He's been a-talking of you all night."

"In his sleep?" inquired the Duchess, not displeased at this mark of attention on Bob's part.

"Half asleep and half awake I think he's been," replied Bob's mother. "I can't make it out. If he ain't better to-morrow I'll have to call Dr. Lyon in."

"Shall I go for him now?" asked Betsy

Newbiggin, whose sympathies were not entirely confined to her trade in liquorice-water.

"No," said Bob's mother, "I must speak to father first. If Dr. Lyon comes he'll have to be paid."

The Duchess looked about the room. Bob was in bed, seemingly asleep. By the side of the bed was a hen canary in a cage so hung that when Bob opened his eyes (supposing he did not turn round) they would light upon the bird. The Duchess standing by the bed leant over Bob; and Bob, waking at that moment, said, as though he had just been indulging in a long conversation on an interesting subject and this was the outcome of it,

"Mother, if I die, give the Duchess my bird."

These words produced a shock. Betsy Newbiggin began to tremble, and the Duchess's heart beat more quickly.

"What nonsense is the boy chattering about!" exclaimed Bob's mother, patting

the pillow and smoothing the bed-clothes, and striving in this way to hide the agitation produced by the boy's request.

Bob appeared not to hear his mother's remark, and proceeded:

"You'll take care of the bird, Duchess, and think of Bob sometimes?"

"Oh, yes, Bob," said the Duchess.

"Then I don't mind. I'll think of you sometimes too, Duchess."

The Duchess pondered and presently asked, "How will you do that, Bob?"

"Do what, Duchess?"

"Think of me when you're dead."

"I'll be able to. Mother told me so. I shall be up there."

"Oh," said the Duchess, following the direction of Bob's eyes, unconscious of his meaning.

"There now, get along with you," said Bob's mother to the two girls, "or the boy'll never have done with his nonsense."

"You'll come and see me to-morrow,

Duchess?" said Bob, as the girls were leaving the room.

"Yes," promised the Duchess, with a backward glance at the bird, which was now an object of more than ordinary interest to her.

For four days the Duchess paid a visit to Bob, upon whom Dr. Lyon was then attending. The doctor met her on the fifth day, and forbade her to come again, saying something about fever, which the Duchess did not understand. Two days after that she herself was taken ill. Sally did not leave her; the Duchess lay quiet until the afternoon, when she suddenly asked Sally how Bob was.

"'Oh, my!" cried Sally, clasping her hands. "Bob's got the fever. You ain't been to see him, have you?"

But the Duchess had already forgotten her inquiry, and seemed to fall asleep before Sally's reply could reach her understanding. Seth Dumbrick came down every half-hour

to look at his child, and grew so uneasy about her that he went for Dr. Lyon. This was in the evening, and Sally peered anxiously into the doctor's face as he felt the Duchess's pulse.

"I was afraid of it," said the doctor to Seth, "when I saw her at the boy's house. She's caught the fever. This is not the best place for a child to fight through an illness. We might manage to get her into the hospital."

"No, oh, no!" cried Sally; "don't let her be took there!"

"We can take care of her here," said Seth. "I shouldn't like to lose sight of the child."

"Very well. And are you going to nurse her, Sally?"

"Yes, sir; oh, yes, sir," said Sally, whose face had suddenly assumed a pinched expression. "I'll stop up with her day and night. I won't take my clothes off till she's better."

Dr. Lyon gave her a kind look and a kiss, and, promising to send in some medicine, took his departure. Then commenced an anxious time. The fever assumed a dangerous form, and for days the Duchess's life was in danger. Never till now had Seth Dumbrick realised how deeply he loved this child of his adoption. It had not hitherto been his fate to suffer from any strong emotion of sorrow or gladness, and the novelty of the grief which now affected him gave it an almost overwhelming force. He wandered in and out of the cellar a hundred times a day, meek but fretful, with gentleness, but not with resignation, He and Sally had changed places; she was the strong reliant soul in their humble home, and the old man looked to the child for support and consolation.

"If our angel dies, Sally," he said, "I shall never know happiness again."

Sally averted her face from him to check the weakness that threatened to overcome

her. She knew full well that she needed all her strength for the work she was performing; the instinct of devoted love—which needs no teaching to bring it into flower—had instilled wisdom into the child's heart.

"Some kinds of knowledge come to a man late in life," he continued softly; "since you and our darling have been with me I've learnt something that I was ignorant of. I'd read of it, not quite in an unbelieving way, but with the sort of doubt upon me that a story writ to amuse a child might bring. Since then I've known what happiness is."

"Did you never know before?" asked Sally wistfully.

"Never before, my child," he answered, huskily.

"Daddy," said Sally solemnly, "you mustn't make me cry. I ain't got time for it. There's the beef-tea to git ready, and the arrerroot ——"

"You must compel that child to take rest," said Dr. Lyon to Seth later in the day, "or she'll break down. Human nature's limited, as a certain friend of mine used to say."

"I tried to persuade her," said Seth, "last night to go to bed, but she wouldn't; she cried and said it'd be easier for her to die than to sleep."

"She must be made to sleep," said the doctor. "If you come round to my place I'll give you something that will conquer her. She's a pearl, and must not be allowed to kill herself."

In accordance with the doctor's instructions Seth at midnight desired Sally to lie down on his bed; but Sally stoutly refused. Finding that his arguments were not strong enough to convince her that rest was necessary, he produced a paper written by Dr. Lyon to the effect that unless Sally Chester slept for four hours that night he would not come to see the Duchess again.

"So you see," said Seth, "you will hurt the Duchess by being obstinate."

"But you can tell Dr. Lyon that I've been asleep," persisted Sally.

"When you haven't?" interrupted Seth, with a touch of his old humour. "O Sally, Sally! would you teach me to tell lies at my time of life? Come now, my dear, be good and reasonable. I'll watch by our treasure till you wake up; I know you wouldn't trust her with anybody else."

"No, that I wouldn't; and if she asks for me you'll call me at once?"

"Yes, you may trust me, Sally."

With that Sally yielded, and, with small persuasion, drank the draught prepared for her.

"I'll go in five minutes," she said, sitting on a stool by the bedside, and gazed lovingly on the sleeping Duchess.

"All right," said Seth, who was sitting on a chair close to her; "rest your head on my knee, dear child."

With a grateful sigh, Sally obeyed, and clasped Seth's hand, which was lying with light touch on her neck. Thus, with tired eyes watching the Duchess's face, she remained for two or three minutes, when the narcotic she had taken overpowered her, and she sank to sleep. Seth raised her softly in his arms, and placed her in his bed, covering her up warm, and kissing her before he resumed his seat at the Duchess's bedside. The child had been peculiarly restless all the evening, but was now in a calmer state. For an hour Seth kept his watch faithfully, and without moving from his seat; but some anxiety with reference to Sally caused him to step softly to her side. Sally was in a deep sleep; her fingers were tightly interlaced, and her face wore an anxious expression, but she was at rest. The strangeness of the situation, the silence which at such a time so powerfully asserts itself, and the eloquent lesson of love and devotion he saw before him, had their

due effect upon Seth Dumbrick's mind, and he held his hand before his half-closed eyelids with the air of a man to whom new and strange aspects of life had unexpectedly presented themselves. He was not long thus occupied; he was startled from his musing by a word uttered with singular clearness—a sacred word never before heard in that dim dwelling-place. "Mamma! mamma!" cried the Duchess; and hurrying to her, Seth saw her sitting up in bed, with her white arms stretched forth, and the loving word hanging on her lips. It was like a cry to heaven from a heart whose tenderest pulse had only now found a voice. There was yearning, there was a plaintive reproach in the cry. The Duchess's cheeks were red and hot, her lips were made eloquent by her plaintive appeal to an invisible presence, and her eyes were wide open, seeing nothing that was actually before her. Seth, with great timidity, but with infinite tenderness, placed his arm about the neck of the

Duchess, and drew her face to his breast. She submitted unresistingly, and closing her eyes, relapsed into slumber. Seth, then with wrinkled forehead, rasped his chin with his hard hand, and marvelled by what mysterious means the Duchess's thoughts had been driven back to her infant days, when a mother's love undoubtedly encompassed her. There was no difficulty in arriving at the conclusion that the mother's love was pure and good; the tone in which the child had uttered the cry proclaimed it. "What dream or fancy," mused Seth, "could have brought to the memory of the child a mother of whom she had such brief experience?" And then his mind reverted to the mystery which surrounded the Duchess's introduction to Rosemary Lane, gaining no light, however, from what had just occurred. "If," he continued, "there are such things as spirits, perhaps the Duchess saw her mother's when she called to her." For although he had settled his

convictions with respect to the Bible, he had by no means made up his mind generally on spiritual matters. The night passed without further interruption, and in the early morning Seth very quietly performed Sally's duties of lighting the fire and preparing the breakfast. Sally still slept soundly, and Seth would not disturb her. It was nine o'clock before she opened her eyes, and then she jumped up briskly, bright and fresh, and ready to resume her labour of love.

"The Duchess has been very good, Sally," said Seth; "and how do you feel?"

"I can go on now," replied Sally, whose first steps were directed to the bedside of her idol, "I can go on now without sleep till she gits quite better."

Upon going up to his stall, Seth saw Betsy Newbiggin and a number of other children standing in the road.

"Please, Mr. Dumbrick," said Betsy, "I mustn't come any nearer to you, 'cause

mother said I'd ketch the fever, and if I did she'd wollop me. We wants to know how the Duchess is."

"Very ill, Betsy," said Seth gravely.

"She ain't a-goin' to die, Mr. Dumbrick?" asked Betsy apprehensively.

"I hope not," said Seth softly, with a slight shiver. "You don't want her to die, do you?"

"How can you go and arks us such a thing?" exclaimed Betsy indignantly. "We want her to git up and come and play. We're too fond on her to wish anything like that. Ain't we?"

All the little heads—most of them uncombed, and nearly all with dirty faces—were nodded solemnly and emphatically in response.

"And please," said Betsy, "here's a orange as Jimmy Platt arksed me to give the Duchess. Jimmy's gone out with his father and a barrer; and here's a gingerbreadman as this little gal bought with a ha'-

penny as she sold a bit of lead for, and here's a bottle of liquorish-water as'll cure the Duchess if you'll give her two teaspoonfuls every quarter of a hour. It's sure to. I made it myself; and it's as strong as strong can be."

Betsy laid these love-offerings in a row on the kerbstone, and Seth contemplated them and her with grim tenderness.

"And here," continued Betsy, producing from under her frock a birdcage with a canary in it, "here's poor Bob's bird, and it's got to be give to the Duchess, and she's got to take great care on it. Them's Bob's words. She's got to take great care on it."

Betsy would have proceeded, for she was glib of tongue, but Seth incautiously moved a step towards her, and she and her companions scampered off in great haste, with the fear of fever in their hearts.

"Well, well," muttered Seth, who at any other time would have derived much amuse-

ment from the interview and its termination, "human nature's not such a bad thing after all."

Not by any means an original observation, but most certainly a wholesome discovery for a person to make who is disposed to a contrary belief.

Bob's bird was hung by the Duchess's bed, but when during the day the child, in a lucid interval, said tearfully as she looked at it, "Bob's dead, then; I must think of him," Seth, who did not know of the lad's death, regarded the bird as a bird of ill omen. But it puzzled him to discover how, by merely gazing at the bird, the Duchess knew of Bob's death. "She saw her mother last night," he muttered; "are there really spirits? and can she see things?"

With unwearying patience and devotion Sally performed her task of nursing the child whose life was dearer to her than her own, and the most ineffable delight she had ever experienced was on the day that Dr.

Lyon told her that the Duchess was out of danger. All her sadness vanished on the instant, and she stepped about humming softly to herself, to many different airs, "She'll soon git well; she'll soon git well!" That was also the happiest day in Seth's life; and out of pure gratefulness of heart, he took a walk in the fields, and gazed on the evidences of Nature with feelings of reverence and thankfulness.

When he returned home, a surprise awaited him. There was Sally's mother, who, having learnt by letter of the Duchess's illness, had obtained a short holiday for the sole purpose of coming to Rosemary Lane to kiss Sally and help her nurse the child for a few hours. Sally's face was wreathed with smiles, and her step was lighter and her manner more cheerful than they had ever been before. Harmony and affection sweetened the air, and made the common room as bright as a palace.

"I have been growing very old lately,

ma'am," said Seth to Mrs. Chester, as he stopped and kissed the Duchess, who languidly returned the caress, "but from this day I intend to grow young again. We've had a hard time, ma'am, but the lesson, when it ends as this one's happily doing, is a good un, I think, and makes people better instead of worse."

He spoke with tender gaiety, and was for the moment an entirely different Seth Dumbrick from the Seth Dumbrick whom Mrs. Chester knew in former years. But he relapsed into his older self very shortly afterwards, and now that the danger was over, the old manner reasserted itself.

Mrs. Chester was compelled to return to her duties early in the morning, and Seth accompanied her to the coach. She had not forgotten her old neighbours, and had found time on the previous evening to run round and shake hands and exchange friendly greetings with this one and that one, especially with Dr. Lyon, who had proved

himself her true friend when most she needed one. On their way to the yard from which the coach was to start, Seth related to her the incident of the Duchess calling out to her mother in the dead of night, and the impression it made upon him.

"One would have thought," said Seth, "coming to you as young as she did, that she could have no remembrance of such things."

"What!" exclaimed Mrs. Chester; "no remembrance of the mother who nursed and suckled her! When children forget that, it's time that the world should come to an end."

"I judge from myself," said Seth. "If I'd have lost my mother, and been taken from her when I was two years old, I should have had no knowledge or remembrance of her."

"Knowledge and remembrance aren't close relations," observed Mrs. Chester,

with a wise shake of her head. "I can remember some things of which I've no knowledge. I can remember an orange I had given me when I was a little one and was dying as they supposed. I can see myself eating that orange, but I don't know how it came into my hands, or who give it to me, and nothing else about it except that I was eating it." Mrs. Chester looked with an air of triumph at Seth, as though she had unexpectedly to herself—as was the case—established a difficult proposition somewhat neatly. "But that's not the way with everybody perhaps. You and the Duchess—— I do believe she grows prettier than ever! I thought she was the most lovely babe I'd ever set eyes on, and I don't mind telling you now that I felt bad when I saw how beautiful she was, and how different my dear Sally looked. But Sally's improving, Mr. Dumbrick."

"That she is, Mrs. Chester. I shouldn't wonder if she grows up quite pretty. She

only wants filling out, but she's that active she doesn't give time for the flesh to settle on her bones. I'll tell you when she looked so beautiful in my eyes that I felt she couldn't be improved on. It was when I used to come down into the cellar softly without her knowing, and saw her with her arms round the Duchess's neck, feeding her maybe, or singing to her—she's got a nice voice, has Sally. I don't want ever to see a face prettier or better than Sally's face looked then."

This was very sweet in Mrs. Chester's ears, and she said as she pressed his hand,

"I'm a fortunate woman, with all my troubles."

"We are all of us fortunate," said Seth philosophically, "in spite of worry and vexation, if we'd only look on it in the right light. But for all that, the world's wrong."

"In what way, Mr. Dumbrick?"

"We haven't time to talk of it," replied Seth, skilfully evading the knotty points involved in his assertion; "it'd take me a week. You was saying a little while ago about me and the Duchess, when you broke off—or rather you was going to say something about the Duchess remembering and me not remembering."

"Only that we're not all alike. You're a man as has seen trouble——"

"Not a great deal," interrupted Seth. "I've a notion that those that have ties of affection enjoy more and suffer more than those that haven't. Now, I've been a selfish creature all my life, and it's only lately that I may say as I've had ties that have made me care for much outside myself. Put it another way. Say that I'm a hedgehog and the Duchess is an angel. Here's the coach. Good-bye, and good luck to you."

"You've heard nothing of my poor boy Ned, I suppose?"

"Nothing."

"No, more have I," said Mrs. Chester, with a sigh. "My poor boy! My poor boy!" And the mother's heart went out across the seas to the reprobate. As she was stepping into the coach she said, "When the Duchess gets better it'd be a fine thing if you could take her into the country for a day, and perhaps Sally could go along with her. You've no idea what good a bit of grass and a mouthful of free air can do, especially to children, who get but little of 'em."

"Seth Dumbrick," said Seth to himself, as he walked home, "you're coming to something. You go on like this, and in time you won't know yourself. To think that you, who never had a sweetheart, should be taken in as you're being taken in by a parcel of women and children who are no more bone of your bone or flesh of your flesh than that donkey is. Stop a bit though. Some wiseacres have set it down in black and

white that men and donkeys are shoots off one tree. Perhaps that accounts for it."

What it accounted for was not clearly discernible from Seth's utterances, but he appeared to be perfectly satisfied with his hazy conclusions, and he walked home in a state of great contentment.

Now that the Duchess was in a fair way of recovery, and could do nothing to amuse herself, she drew upon Seth's resources for the agreeable passing away of the idle hours, and he, with his Bible on his knee, would relate to her in a familiar way such stories as he thought would best please her. That he was by no means faithful to his text, and was given to introduce irrelevant matter, did not detract from the pleasure the children derived from his narrations. He happened to open the First Book of Kings, and deeming Solomon a tempting theme, he related the history of that wise king with a curious mingling of fact and fancy and

shrewd observation. The story of Solomon's life and deeds seemed to possess a peculiar fascination for the Duchess, and she bound Seth to it for three consecutive nights, somewhat to his wonder, for he failed to discover what special attraction it could have for the child. On the third night, however, a few words which she let fall proved that she had been thinking of the subject in her way and to some effect.

"That was a grand place King Solomon built," said the Duchess. "Where is it?"

"Nowhere; it was destroyed, and I'm told the Jews go into mourning every year because of its destruction."

"Does that do any good?" said the Duchess.

"Not a bit."

"What came of all the gold?"

"Don't know; dare say the Jews got a lot of it on the sly."

"It *was* all gold, wasn't it? It says so there."

"Yes," said Seth, reading from parts, "'so Solomon overlaid the house within with pure gold;' then again—'the whole house he overlaid with gold until he had finished all the house; and the whole altar that was by the oracle he overlaid with gold.' Why, the candlesticks, and the spoons, and the snuffers to snuff the candles, and the very hinges of the doors,—everything was gold. And besides, there was such heaps of precious stones that they hardly knew were to stick 'em."

"There couldn't have been any poor people there," said Sally.

"I'm not so sure, Sal. In the middle of it all there's talk of famine, and pestilence, and blasting. It's pretty much of a muddle, it seems to me."

"I want to know," said the Duchess later in the night. "In that temple wasn't there a garden?"

"I don't find mention of any. I should

say not, or if there was, it wasn't worth mentioning."

"No flowers?"

"Not that I know of."

"Wasn't there no birds?" asked Sally.

"Yes, gold ones, and there's flowers of gold and cherubims of gold. All gold and silver and precious stones."

"Was Solomon a good man?" asked Sally.

"He's said to be the wisest king that ever was known. He had a thousand wives."

"Oh, my!" cried Sally, and would have continued the theme, but that Seth deemed it prudent to change the subject.

CHAPTER XVI.

SETH DUMBRICK BECOMES IMAGINATIVE.

Mrs. Chester's recommendation to Seth Dumbrick to give the Duchess and Sally a day in the country was weighing heavily upon his mind. That it would do the Duchess good there could not be a shadow of doubt, and it was certain that she required a change of some sort; for although she was now better and moving about, her steps were languid, and there were no signs of a return to her old elasticity of spirits. Day after day Seth watched in vain for symptoms of vigour in the Duchess, and the more he watched, the more he was troubled.

"She's well," he said to the doctor, "but she doesn't get strong."

"She wants iron," said the doctor; and he gave her iron, but it did not improve her. Then the doctor said that the child wanted fresh air.

"Can I get it in bottles?" asked Seth, with melancholy humour.

The doctor smiled, and walked away.

Seth Dumbrick was afraid to mention the matter to the Duchess, for he knew that she would leap for joy at the prospect, and that the hope deferred would make her worse both in body and spirits. The truth was, he was too poor for the luxury. The Duchess's illness had exhausted every penny of his savings. He confided in Sally, who entered at once upon the consideration of the difficulty, but her suggestions were not of a practical character.

"If we had some o' them cherubims of gold," she mused, "or some o' them gold flowers out of the Temple——"

"They might lead us," added Seth,

"to the real flowers we want to see growing."

Sally was ready with another suggestion, in the shape of a subscription among the Duchess's playmates.

"They're so fond on her that they'll do anythink for her. They'll all give. Betsy Newbiggin, and Jane Preedy——" but she was stopped by the look of suppressed merriment on Seth's face.

"Pins and spoonfuls of liquorice-water won't take us into the country, Sally. No, we must think of something else. Perhaps I shall have a bit of good luck"—adding, under his breath—"if I do, and there's money in it, it'll be the first bit of good luck that has ever fell to Seth Dumbrick's lot."

There seemed no way out of the difficulty, and the Duchess remained in the same languid state. But the bit of good luck that Seth had not the slightest expectation of meeting with did occur, and in a strange way.

The duties of the postman in Rosemary Lane were light, and there were persons in the neighbourhood who had never arrived at the dignity of receiving a letter. Certainly no child had ever received one. General astonishment was therefore created when it became known that the postman, stopping to deliver a communication at the Royal George, the celebrated gin-palace of the locality, had produced a letter, addressed to "The Duchess of Rosemary Lane," and, with an air which proclaimed that he looked upon the matter as a joke, had asked the proprietor of the gin-palace if he knew any person answering to that description. Regarding the matter in a more serious light when he was informed that there really was such a person in existence, the postman proceeded to Seth Dumbrick's stall, and delivered the letter in the presence of a dozen or so curiousmongers, who had become aware of the circumstance, and considered it sufficiently interesting to warrant

an inquiry. The postman, with a stern sense of duty, did not part with the letter too easily. It was a Government affair, he said, and he might be called over the coals for it. Indeed, under any circumstances, he declared his intention of making a special memorandum with reference to it, for his own satisfaction and that of the head of his department. The idea of a duchess in Rosemary Lane was something almost too astounding for credibility.

"Nevertheless it is a fact," said Seth Dumbrick, looking at the letter with much inward astonishment; not knowing what the letter might contain, he deemed it prudent to conceal any exhibition of this feeling. "She lives with me."

"If you're her father, I suppose you call yourself a duke."

"I'm her guardian, and I call myself a cobbler."

The postman was aware that such a conversation was outside the scope of his

duties, but he was fond of gossip and banter.

"I'd like to see this Duchess."

"Duchess!" called Seth, down the stairs.

Up came the Duchess, accompanied by Sally.

"What's your name?" asked the postman.

"The Duchess of Rosemary Lane," replied the Duchess.

"And upon my word," remarked the postman, "she looks like a little lady." He could not help admiring her; he had a little girl of his own at home.

"She is one," said Sally promptly.

The postman having departed, Seth, with the letter on his leather apron, fell into a brown study. It had suddenly occurred to him that it might contain unwelcome intelligence; perhaps it came from some person who claimed the child. In that case, would it not be better for him to destroy it without reading it? Sally, aware from the expres-

sion on Seth's face—a book in which she was by this time deeply read—that he was revolving an important consideration with reference to the letter, was in a fever of excitement. So, in a less degree, were the neighbours surrounding the stall.

"Open it, Mr. Dumbrick," said Mrs. Preedy, who was always one in a Rosemary Lane crowd. There are in every neighbourhood two or three women ordained to fulfil this special mission. "Open it, and let's know what's inside."

Seth, recalled to himself by this polite request, looked up with shrewd twinkles, and replied,

"Sorry to disappoint you, Mrs. Preedy, but this is a private matter between the Duchess and the Queen, and to let *you* into the secret 'd be more than my head's worth. Let's go downstairs, Duchess, and see what her Majesty has to say to you."

"He's the selfishest man," said Mrs. Preedy, "is that Mr. Dumbrick, as ever I

clapped eyes on—keeping things to hisself in that way! It's a good job he ain't married; he'd torment the soul out of a poor woman."

Meanwhile, this selfishest of men was sitting in his cellar, with the Duchess on his knee.

"Duchess," he said, in a tone which denoted that he wished to engage her serious attention, "this is a most unexpected and mysterious occurrence. Since I've been in Rosemary Lane, I've received altogether three letters—about one every ten years—and here you are at your age beginning to bother the Post Office. You're commencing early, Duchess."

The Duchess nodded languidly. The letter, not being something nice to eat, was of no interest to her.

"The question is," continued Seth, who seemed to have lost for the time his decision of character, "what is in this letter, and who sent it. It's a good handwriting, and

there can't be any mistake about its being for you."

"Open it, Daddy," said Sally.

"There's no hurry, Sally. Don't let us meet trouble halfway. Duchess, do you love Daddy Dumbrick?"

"Oh, yes," sighed the Duchess, closing her eyes, and leaning back in Seth's arms.

"You don't want to leave him?"

"No," murmured the Duchess.

"Because you see, Sally, the world 'd seem a different place to me, not half so good as it was, if anything was to occur as'd take the Duchess away from us."

"No one shall," cried Sally, beginning to share Seth's fears, "no one can!"

"I don't know that," said Seth, with an apprehensive observance of the letter; "they sha'n't if I can help it. If I had plenty of money, which I haven't, you, me, and the Duchess 'd steal away one night from Rosemary Lane, and 'd go and live in the country, where nobody 'd know us, and where we

could see green fields and flowers, and breathe the fresh air from morning to night. For that's what our precious wants. Green fields and fresh air 'd soon pull her round, and we'd live there happily all our lives."

"Like gipsies, Daddy."

"Yes, Sal, like gipsies."

"That *would* be nice," said Sally; adding wistfully, "but it can't be, Daddy, can it?"

"No, it can't be, unless a shower of gold was to come down through the ceiling—and that ain't likely. Let's see what's in the letter."

Had he suspected it to contain gunpowder he could not have broken the seal more timidly. It was a letter without an envelope, folded in the old-fashioned way, and when it was opened, a thin paper enclosure fluttered to the ground. In his anxiety Seth did not notice what had escaped, and he turned the letter this way and that, without meeting with any writing but the address. Singular as it was, he experienced

a feeling of relief at this dispersal of his fears.

"Here's something dropped, Daddy," said Sally, in a tone made almost gay by the change of expression in Seth's countenance.

Seth took the enclosure from Sally's hands. It was a Bank of England note for ten pounds.

"Why it's money!" he exclaimed.

"Money!" cried Sally.

"Yes, Sally, money." He glanced up at the ceiling with an air of comical wonder. "We're in Tom Tiddler's ground, Sally."

"No, no," cried Sally, clapping her hands in glee, "it didn't drop from there. It dropped out of the letter."

"That's more wonderful, then, than all the rest put together. Out of the letter! There's not a letter in the letter, Sal—not one, from A to Z." He laughed aloud, and Sally laughed in sympathy. "I don't care where this comes from, nor why it come. What I know is, it's the brightest bit of

good luck that ever happened to a man. This piece of paper's a looking-glass, my child. Look at it—what do you see in it?"

Literal Sally, looking at the bank-note, as Seth held it open before her, began at the beginning.

"There's a picture of a lady with a wand in her hand——"

"Britannia ruling the waves. Is that all you can see in it?"

"No; there's—what funny letters, Daddy! I never saw any like 'em before. There's B a n k, Bank—"

Seth took up the word, and read the note from beginning to end, and then repeated his question, "Is that all you can see in it?"

"That's all, Daddy."

"Sally, I'm cleverer than you. I take the note, and put it before me like this—— Stop a minute." The Duchess had fallen asleep in his arms, and he placed her gently on the bed. "Now we can get along. I

look at the note like this, and I see—yes, I see a coach, with you and me and the Duchess sitting on the top of it."

"O Daddy!"

"Here we go, driving into the country. Such a ride, Sally! I see green fields and flowers and fresh air for our darling in it——"

It was with difficulty that Sally kept herself still to hear the rest.

"I see two weeks of green fields and fresh air for our darling in it. And I'm not quite sure that I don't see the sea. Do I see the waves creeping up, Sally?"

"I don't know—oh, *do* you see 'em, Daddy, do you?"

"It's got a little bit cloudy about here"—tracing an imaginary line with his finger—"but it'll clear up soon. And, Sally, I see something still better in it. I see roses for our Duchess's cheeks in it, sparkles for her eyes, lightness for her foot. Kiss the note, Sally. I never thought I should come

to worship Mammon, but I do worship him now, with all my heart."

"Daddy," said Sally, struck with a sudden fear, "is it a good un?"

The alarming suggestion caused Seth to run out of the place, as though he were running for his life, and this display of excitement on his part was so novel that the neighbours who were still waiting in the street for news concerning the letter came, first to the usual conclusion that the house was on fire, and next to the more appetising one that Seth Dumbrick had suddenly gone mad. He was a long time absent, for it was no easy matter to get a ten-pound note changed in Rosemary Lane. There were hundreds who had never seen such a thing, and to whom a sight of it would have been an eighth wonder of the world. At the end of an hour Seth returned in a calmer mood, with a fistful of gold, which he let fall, piece by piece, on the table, before Sally's wondering eyes. She, who never

experienced a pleasure, new or old, without desiring that her idol should share it, caught up the Duchess, crying, "Look, Duchess, look!" The Duchess stretched forth her hand with eager delight, and the children sat close to the table, playing gleefully with the bright pieces, Seth standing at their back, looking at them and at the gold, with one hand resting on the Duchess's shoulder, and the other rasping his chin. His declaration that he did not care where the money came from was not ingenuous. If he had wished, he could not have banished so singular an adventure from his mind, and the more he thought of it the more it puzzled him. He had no friend who was likely or able to commit an action so quixotic; neither had Sally. Turning his attention to the letter again, he held it up to the light and peered closely at it, in the endeavour to discover a clue. Then it came into his mind that there was a kind of colourless ink with which persons wishing to commu-

nicate secretly could write, and which heat alone would render visible, and he placed the paper to the fire, without arriving at any satisfactory result. He could not detect even the scratch of a pen. It was the most unsolvable of riddles. "I am afraid I must give it up," he said to himself, but he could not give it up. With the subject still in his mind, he ascended to his stall to finish some work he had in hand before he started on the contemplated holiday. During his work, a hundred ingenious theories started up, all to be dismissed but one, which took strong possession of him. "Some rich person," he thought, "perhaps a lady who once had a pretty child, as she was ashamed to call her own, has seen the Duchess by chance, and has fallen in love with her beautiful face, because it reminds her of old days. Then she finds out the Duchess's name; then she discovers that the Duchess has been ill; and then she sends a present of money in this mysterious way." The senti-

ment attaching to this fanciful speculation rendered it peculiarly attractive to Seth. "We'll put it down to that," he mused; "stranger things have happened in the world." So he put it down to "that," and produced some pleasant mental pictures out of the fancy.

When the mid-day meal was over, he said, "Duchess, this money's for you. It's been sent because you've got a pretty face, and pretty hands, and bright eyes. And it's going to take us into the country, where the flowers are all a-growing and a-blowing, and where you'll get strong and lively again."

"Then it *will* come true," cried Sally, "what you saw in the ten-pound note!"

"It *will* come true, Sally, if we're alive to-morrow."

An ecstatic silence followed, broken by Sally.

"Then you know who sent the money, Daddy!"

"It was sent by a lady—as handsome a lady as ever you clapped eyes on, Sally."

"And you've seen her?"

"Well—hum!—yes, I've seen her." And here Seth rubbed his forehead, denoting that he meant he had seen her in his mind's eye —a salve to his conscience.

"Where does she live?" asked Sally, whom it was difficult to stop, when she commenced to make inquiries on an interesting theme.

"She lives in—hum!—in Fairyland."

"Oh, where's that?"

"Don't ask any more questions. You'll see a bit of it to-morrow."

CHAPTER XVII.

A GROUP OF TITTLE TATTLERS.

THE following day a sensation was created in Rosemary Lane by the circumstance of Seth Dumbrick's stall being closed, and by a written notice pasted outside, to the effect that he might be expected to return in the course of two or three weeks. The intimation was at first received in good faith, and without any sinister motive being attached to Seth's sudden disappearance. Discontent was certainly expressed at the movement being taken without consultation, and without any of the neighbours being aware of it; it was robbing them of their privileges to be so secret, and it showed an injurious want of confidence. Mrs. Preedy expressed

her opinion that it was mean and underhanded, and declared that it passed *her* comprehension how a man could be so close and selfish—especially when there was so many good creatures—she wouldn't mention names—as was ready to listen to what he'd got to say. By the expression of such sentiments but little harm was done to Seth's character; to ride the high horse does no harm to a man's reputation. But in the course of the day the discontent began to assume a startling and alarming shape—the preliminary phase of which was shown in short and frequent journeys being made to Seth Dumbrick's stall by small knots of people, who stood about and gazed at the closed shutters, with dark thoughts brooding in their minds. It was some little while before these dark thoughts resolved themselves into a distinct shape. There was something wrong, to be sure; but the wrong was not clear until the afternoon. Then a palatable fear for the children crept into the minds

of the gossipers and curiousmongers. Had any one seen the Duchess or Sally that day? No one. That was quite sufficient. The moment the ball was set rolling, it assumed important proportions. "From the day as Seth Dumbrick give that party to the children," said Mrs. Preedy, holding forth in front of the cellar to a knot of eager listeners, "down in that cellar"—with finger ominously pointing—"from that day I began to suspect him, and to feel sure as there was something wrong. I says to him on that very day, 'Strange things is often done down in cellars,' says I; and then I told him that I wouldn't let my Jane go to his party unless I were invited, no, not if he filled my apron with diamings. 'Perhaps,' says I, with my mind full of misbegivings, 'perhaps you've got ghosts and skiletons down in your cellar, Mr. Dumbrick;' and as true as I'm a living woman, he says to me upon that, 'My cellar *is* full of ghosts, Mrs Preedy,' says he; 'my cellar *is* full of

ghosts,' he says. And then he pretended—to turn it off, like—that he didn't know the ghosts was there till a week or two ago."

This narrative imparted a more intense interest to the position of affairs, and imagination ran riot on the contents of the cellar, which became gradually filled with the bones and limbs of murdered persons—Seth Dumbrick's victims, who had been artfully decoyed down the steps and made away with.

"And it shows the wickedness of mankind," said one woman, especially disposed to the horrible, "to think of the way he's kept it secret all this time."

"But," added Mrs. Preedy, with a Solomonic shake of her head, "it must have weighed on his mind, Mrs. Simpkins!"

Upon which most of the women in the crowd shook *their* heads, and murmured, "Ah! that it must! that it must!"

Other imaginative phases relating to Sally and the Duchess, who were pictured

as being either murdered or chained to the wall and left to starve, soon became popular; and ears were pressed to the shutters to catch the groans of the children.

"I can hear something!" cried Mrs. Preedy; which instantly caused the knot of women to declare that, for humanity's sake, the cellar should be broken into and the children rescued. Whether they would have proceeded to this extremity is not certain, and perhaps it was fortunate that the form of Dr. Lyon was at that moment seen approaching them.

"O doctor! O doctor!" cried Mrs. Preedy; and stood before him, pressing her sides, and gasping for breath in her agitation.

"What's the matter, Mrs. Preedy?" asked the doctor. "Spasms?"

"No, sir; oh! no, sir," she replied, still palpitating. "The children! the children!"

"What children?"

"Our beautiful Duchess, sir, and Sally, that we're all so fond on!"

"Well?"

"Down there, sir! Murdered! I heard a groan jest as you come up."

"Which proves," said the doctor, realising the position of affairs, "that they can't be murdered. Mrs. Preedy, do you read your Bible?"

"I hope so, sir, I'm sure," answered Mrs. Preedy in a tone of virtuous injury.

"I hope so too. Do you forget what it says? 'Do unto others as you would others should do unto you.' And, by the same rule, think unto others as you would others should think unto you. What makes you believe that any harm has happened to the children?"

"Well, sir," said Mrs. Preedy, stammering and beginning to waver, "Mr. Dumbrick has suddenly disappeared without saying 'With your leave or by your leave;' and we thought, sir, we thought——"

"What you've no business to think," said the doctor warmly. "Seth Dumbrick has gone into the country with the children, for the sake of the Duchess, who needs fresh air to bring her back to health. And here's the key of his place, which he left with me early this morning. Let me give you a piece of advice, Mrs. Preedy."

"I shall be very grateful, sir, I'm sure," murmured Mrs. Preedy, trembling, not knowing what trouble she might have brought upon herself.

"Go home, then," said the doctor in a grave tone, "and for the future attend more to your own affairs and less to other people's. In plainer words, mind your own business."

"Well, I'm sure!" gasped Mrs. Preedy, as Dr. Lyon stalked away. But she obtained no sympathy from her neighbours, who were only too ready to lay the blame on some one, and who, with justice—for she was the most zealous scandalmonger in Rosemary Lane—laid it upon Mrs. Preedy's

shoulders. So that for once the right scapegoat suffered. Mrs. Preedy went home in an oppressed state of mind, a sadder if not a wiser woman; and the neighbours generally, to show how guiltless they were, became enthusiastic in their praises of Seth Dumbrick; though it must be confessed they bore him in their hearts of hearts a little grudge for having disappointed them of a grand and awful sensation. The opportunities for conferring such distinction on a locality were not frequent, and it was hard to be disappointed.

In the meantime, unconscious of the excitement he had created, Seth Dumbrick, with the Duches and Sally by his side, was sitting on the top of an empty wagon returning to the country, with the driver of which he had bargained for the ride. He deemed it a rare good stroke of luck that he had met with this wagon and driver, for it behoved him to be careful of his purse; he was no spendthrift whom a fortunate wind-

fall was likely to drive into reckless extravagance. It was a fine day, and the delight of the children was unbounded. The fresh air, the clear atmosphere, the dreamy clouds, the beautiful fields, were revelations to them. Occasionally they passed an estate, stone-walled from vulgar eyes, over which, being seated at such an elevation, they could see into the carefully-tended gardens and orchards; and more frequently they passed the prettiest of gardens belonging to humbler folk, the colour and beauty of which were as lovely and charming as Nature could produce, to gladden heart and eye. The driver of the wagon was in no hurry; he had some sixty miles to go, and he worked for no hard taskmaster; he was an old man, and merciful to his cattle, having a love for them, as could easily be seen—all of which circumstances were as precious as gold to the holiday-seekers, for it gave them leisure to see and enjoy. The wagon was a new wagon, of which Seth

made joyous capital, saying it had been built especially for them to ride in on this brightest of all bright days. Overhearing the remark, the driver said that that was a likely thing, too, for things happened pretty much as they were ordained to happen—leastways, that was *his* experience; and said it as though he had high authority for the doctrine. The bells on the harness supplied the music, varying most delightfully according to the pace; for, to please the children, the old driver occasionally smartened the horses into a trot, which they appeared to enjoy as much as they enjoyed the leisurely amble with which they traversed the greater part of the road. He was a kindly old fellow, with a face like a ribstone pippin, and with hands as hard and brown as knotted oak—hands which could be soft and gentle, also, and were, when he pinched the cheek of the Duchess. She, always susceptible to fondling and caressing, looked into the old man's face and smiled, so winsomely as to make him pensive.

"Yours?" he inquired, of Seth Dumbrick.

"No," replied Seth, in a low tone, so that the children should not hear; "not exactly. I've adopted her. An orphan."

"Ah!" said the driver; "then *she's* yours;" glancing at Sally.

"No, I've no children of my own."

"Never been married?"

"No. *You're* a family man, I can see."

"Thirteen of 'em;" adding, in response to the look of astonishment on Seth's face, "Not too many, not one too many."

"Are they all at home?" asked Seth.

"No; they're here and there;" with a wave of his hands cloudwards, sufficiently comprehensive to denote that his brood were scattered over the face of the earth. "We're a travelling family, you see. I've been a wagoner ever since I was a lad. My youngsters took after me, and travelled further—two to America, one to China, one to Australia; and another"—this with a wist-

ful look into the clouds, yearningly eager to fix the spot—"God knows where. But," he added, with a brighter air, "they're doing well, most of 'em. I've no occasion to work, but I couldn't live without a whip. I'd like to die with one in my hand. Then, I love the English roads. You're fond of 'em, too, I can see."

"They are very beautiful," said Seth, "to us especially, who see but little of 'em. I haven't been out of London for fifteen years. And this little girl"—with a kindly pressure of Sally's arm—"has never in her life seen the country till now."

Sally's eyes sparkled a rapturous confirmation. Perhaps more than to either of the others was this holiday an event likely never to be forgotten, and to exercise a permanent influence upon her. It was, indeed, a revelation to her soul; she saw beauty of which she had hitherto had no knowledge or comprehension; and as she sat on the wagon, with one arm fondly

caressing the Duchess, whose head was lying on her bosom, she wished that she and those she loved could go jogging along in this way through the sweet country roads for ever and ever.

CHAPTER XVIII.

AN ADVENTURE AT SPRINGFIELD.

It was nearly noon when the driver said,

"I'm about as peckish as a man—especially a wagoner—can afford to be. Come up, Daisy! Do your best, Cornflower!"

Thus urged, Daisy and Cornflower, regarding the smack of the whip in the air as the merriest of jokes, broke into their smartest trot, and did their best, smelling hay and water in the near distance. The bells jingled gaily, and Sally and the Duchess looked eagerly ahead. So smart was the pace, that within a few moments they saw a house of accommodation for man and beast, at the door of which a number of

men and women were gathered to welcome them. The driver was evidently well known, and a favourite, and when he pulled up, willing hands assisted him to take the harness from the horses.

"An hour's spell here," he said to Seth Dumbrick, as he lifted the children to the ground, tossing them in the air, after the manner of a man accustomed to children. "If you're going to eat, you'd best take the little girls to the back of the house, and enjoy it regular country fashion. To think," he added, pinching Sally's happy face, "of never seeing the country till now!"

With a jug of beer and some cold meat and bread, Seth and his girls made their way to the garden at the back of the inn, where, sitting in a natural bower, upon seats built round the trunk of an apple-tree, they enjoyed the most delicious meal of their lives.

"We're getting our roses again," said Seth Dumbrick, gazing with unalloyed

pleasure on the beautiful face of the Duchess. "Now, what we've got to do, is to wish that the minutes won't fly away."

But fly away they did, and in less than no time the old wagoner summoned them to the road.

"Unless," he said jocosely, "you want to be left behind."

"I'd like to be," sighed Sally.

In the front of the inn, where the horses stood ready for their work, the landlady met them with flowers and kisses and kind words for the children; and when they were lifted into the wagon, they found that a quantity of sweet hay had been thrown in by the thoughtful wagoner—kind marks of attention which met with grateful and full-hearted acknowledgments. On they went again, gazing wistfully at the inn and the pleasant people standing about it, until they were out of sight. On they went, in a state of dreamy happiness, through the new world of peace and beauty, into which

surely trouble could never enter. Every turn of the road disclosed fresh wonders, and a mighty interest was attached to the smallest incidents;—every queerly-shaped tree, every garden, every cottage, every mansion, that came into view; cows drinking from a distant pool; a mother with her baby in her arms, standing at a window framed in ivy; old men and women hobbling about the grounds of a charitable institution; two truant school-boys racing and shouting with wild delight, with no thought of the terrors to come when their fault was discovered; a man asleep under a hedge, and a woman sitting patiently by his side; a lady beautifully dressed, who paused to look at the children; a group of gipsies; a groom riding towards London at full speed;—one and all formed enduring and interesting pictures, and added to the pleasures of the ride.

"Where do we stop?" asked Seth Dumbrick of the wagoner.

"At The World's End," replied the wagoner; "we'll make it at five o'clock, I reckon."

He was a shrewd calculator. As a church clock chimed five, he pointed with his whip to an old-fashioned inn, lying off from the roadside some hundred yards away, saying that was The World's End, and that they would put up there for the night, and start again early in the morning. As he spoke, they were nearing a pair of massive iron gates, through the open work of which could be seen a curved carriage-drive, lined with great elms. Straight and tall and stately, they presented the appearance of a giant regiment drawn up in lines to do honour to those who passed between.

"That's a grand place," observed Seth.

"It's the finest estate for many a mile round," said the wagoner.

"It has got a name."

"Oh, yes. Springfield it's called."

Seth Dumbrick listened. The estate was

so built round with walls and trees that the carriage-drive was the only part open to the gaze of the passer-by. A faint sound of laughter—the laughter of the young—floated to his ears.

"It isn't so solemn as it looks," said Seth.

"There's a lot of company at Springfield," rejoined the wagoner. "They're spending a fine time, I reckon."

"The master must be a rich man. Is he a lord?"

"He'll be one some day they say. He's a great lawyer."

In another moment the horses stopped at The World's End, and showed by a merry jingle of their bells that they knew the day's work was done. It was still broad daylight, and Seth set so much store upon the children being as much as they could in the open air, that, after arranging for the night's accommodation at The World's End, he and Sally and the Duchess started for

a walk through the country lanes. There was sufficient beauty within the immediate vicinity of The World's End to engage their attention and admiration, and Seth, fearful of over-fatiguing the Duchess, so directed his steps as to keep Springfield always in view—whereby he was sure that he was never very far from the inn in which they were to pass the night. It thus happened that they frequently skirted the immediate boundaries of the estate—here formed by a close-knit hedge through which a hare could not have made its way, here by a natural creek, with stalwart trees on the Springfield side, here by a stone wall, in lieu of a more natural defence against encroachment. It was a quiet and peaceful evening, and after a couple of hours of almost restful sauntering, so little of labour was there in their mode of going about, they came suddenly upon a narrow lane, bounded by a broken hedge. The prospect was so pretty, and the glimpse of green trees forming an archway some

twenty yards distant was so inviting, that Seth, without a thought of trespass, lifted the Duchess and Sally over the hedge, and followed them. A gipsy woman, sitting within the shadow of the arch of trees, would probably have called for no special attention, had not the Duchess — upon whom the flashing eyes, the dark sunburnt face, stern and sombre in its aspect, the shining black hair but slightly covered with the usual red handkerchief, and the generally bold air which pervaded the woman, produced an effect little less than terrifying— clasped Seth's hand in fear, and strove to pull him back.

"Don't be frightened, Duchess," said Seth soothing; "it's only a gipsy."

None but the closest observer, and one, too, on the watch for signs, could have detected the slightest variation of expression on the woman's face. To all appearance, she was entirely unconscious of the presence of the holiday party; but her quick ears

had caught very distinctly each word uttered by Seth, and her quick sense, sharpened from her birth to certains ends conducive to the earning of sixpences in an unlawful way, had already placed a construction upon them which might lead to profit. Without raising her eyes, she noted the composition of the party, and waited for the course of events to bring her into action. Seth's soothing tone quieted the Duchess's fears, and his words excited Sally to a most wonderful degree. She had never seen a real gipsy; she had heard of them and of their occult powers of divination, and now one was before her, endowed with the mysterious and awful power of prophecy and of seeing into the future. The opportunity was too precious to be lost. She clasped her hands, and with a beseeching look at Seth, cried,

"O Daddy! ask her to tell the Duchess's fortune."

"Nonsense, Sally," said Seth. "She

can no more tell fortunes than you or I can. Why, one of your trances is a hundred times better than anything she can tell us. Besides, what is to be is to be."

He spoke in a low tone, and the gipsy lost not a word of his speech.

Sally was not given to dispute with her guardian. She loved and respected him too well, believing that he knew better than anybody else in the world what was good for everybody; but she had to struggle with herself for strength to bear the disappointment. The next few steps brought them to the side of the gipsy, who rose and confronted them.

"Let me tell your fortune, pretty lady."

Sally's heart beat quickly as the gipsy took her hand and held it with light firm grasp.

"We have no time for fortune-telling," said Seth, adding gently, "and no money."

"Sixpence won't harm you, kind gentle-

man," said the gipsy, sitting on a hillock, so that her face and Sally's were on a level. "You haven't come all the way from London to spoil the pleasure of these little ladies for sixpence."

"Oh, oh!" cried Sally, palpitating. "She knows we come from London!"

"The gipsy woman knows everything, and sees everything, pretty lady."

The circumstance of being called pretty lady in so winsome a voice was honey to Sally's soul.

Seeing no way but one out of the difficulty, Seth gave the woman a sixpenny-piece, which she, suspicious of the tricks of Londoners of a common grade, placed between her teeth to test. Sally meanwhile, having an arm disengaged, clasped the Duchess's waist, and drew her close to her side. The gipsy cast a rapid glance upon the two children, noting the tenderness expressed in the action, and then fell to examining Sally's hand.

"You see the usual things in it, of course," said Seth, with but small respect in his tone for the woman's art.

"What usual things?" asked the gipsy surlily.

"Sickness, sorrow, sweethearts, riches."

"I see no riches; here is trouble."

"Not in the present," said Seth, somewhat repentant of his rashness in angering the woman, as he saw Sally turn pale.

"No, not in the present. Trouble in the past, trouble in the future."

"Easy to predict. Trouble comes to all of us."

"Look here, master. Are you reading the signs or me?"

"You; and you read them in the usual way."

"Is it reading them in the usual way to tell you that you are not this little lady's father?"

"Our faces teach you that."

"Is it reading them in the usual way to tell you that this little lady's trouble in the future will come from love?"

"A dark or fair man?" asked Seth, still bantering, for the purpose of inspiring Sally with courage.

"From no man, dark or fair. From love of a woman."

"Of a woman!" exclaimed Seth biting his lip.

"Ay, of a woman, when this little lady herself is a woman." A curtsey from the gipsy caused Seth to turn his head, and he saw that other persons had joined the party: a gentleman of middle age and a lady richly dressed.

"Come," said the gentleman, with a careless attempt to draw the lady from the group.

"No," protested the lady, "no, Mr. Temple; I must positively stop. I dote on fortune-telling; I've had mine told a hundred times."

"It's a bright fortune, my lady," said the gipsy, still retaining Sally's hand, "as bright as this summer's day."

"It is evening now," observed the gentleman addressed as Mr. Temple. "Better not stop. The grey shadows are coming."

"There are no grey shadows for my lady," quickly answered the gipsy.

"Rose-coloured shall all your days be," said the gentleman, with an amused glance at his companion, "if——" and paused.

"Yes—if——" prompted the lady.

"If," continued the gentleman, "you cross the poor gipsy's hand with silver. Isn't that so?" addressing the gipsy.

The woman smiled deferentially, and held out her hand to receive the silver which the lady took from her purse.

"And it's enough to provoke even a gentleman's curiosity," said the lady, "to hear that trouble is to come to this sweet

girl through the love of a woman instead of that of a man."

"All troubles through love come from love of a woman," observed the gentleman oracularly.

"Does *your* experience teach you that?" inquired the lady, peering laughingly into his eyes.

"What my experience teaches me," he replied, with a shadow gathering on his face, "I reserve."

"After a lawyer's fashion," said the lady, again taking up his words. "You are self-convicted, Mr. Temple."

"In what way?"

"If you saw your face in a glass, you would receive your answer."

"Psha!" he exclaimed, directing his attention to the gipsy. "You have told this little girl that a woman will bring her trouble. Beyond your skill to say what woman."

"A woman younger than herself; more

beautiful than herself; that she loves, and loves dearly. Show yourself, my beauty."

With no unkindly hand, knowing that it would not be tolerated, she raised the Duchess's chin with her fingers, so that the lady and gentleman could see her face. At the same moment Seth Dumbrick plucked the Duchess from the gipsy, and pressed her to his side, with a steady eye upon the gentleman.

"What a lovely child!" cried the lady, stooping, and placing her hand on the Duchess's shoulder. "Look, Mr. Temple. Did you ever in your life see so beautiful a face?"

He paused before he replied, and then the words came slowly from his lips.

"Once I saw a face as beautiful."

"When? Where?" eagerly asked the lady.

"In a dream."

"A dream!" exclaimed the gipsy, tracing a line on Sally's hand. "There are

dreams mixed up with this little lady's fortune."

"Oh, yes, yes!" cried Sally. "I have 'em! I have 'em!"

The gipsy turned to Seth.

"Do I read the signs in the usual way?"

"You have hit enough nails on the head," said Seth, "and you have earned your money. It is time for us to go."

"Not yet, oh, not yet," interposed the lady. "We want this lovely child's fortune told." She drew the Duchess from Seth; the child, fascinated by her pretty face and soft silk dress, went willingly enough, and Sally and Seth looked on with jealous uneasy eyes. "You need not be frightened, my good man. I shall not harm your daughter."

"Bless your ladyship's heart," said the gipsy, "he's not her father."

"How does she know?" inquired the lady. "Is it true?"

For a moment a falsehood rested on Seth's lips, but he refused to utter it. "She's not my child," he said. "I have adopted her."

"Mr. Temple," said the lady excitedly, "does the law permit children to be bought and sold?"

"What is your head running on?"

"If I were disposed to be satirical," she retorted, "I should declare that a lawyer was never known to give a plain answer to a plain question."

"Be satirical, and declare it," he said, with a smile which showed how little weight such an opinion would have with him.

"I understand the smile, Mr. Temple. It expresses, 'What can a lady know of such weighty matters?'"

"At all events lawyers keep to the point."

"I will endeavour to keep to mine. Wives, I know, are bought and sold."

He interrupted her pleasantly.

"It is a popular satirical shaft that maidens are."

"You wish to confuse me. I read last week of a wife being taken by her husband to a market-place, with a rope round her neck—think of that! With a rope round her neck!"

"I am thinking of it. There are ropes and ropes. Was it a chain of gold, or a hempen cord?"

"A rope, I said; a vulgar cruel rope. And the husband sold his wife for two—two—oh, yes, pots! that was the word —for two pots of beer."

He could not rid himself of his caustic humour.

"Many women would be dear at that."

"Being made in court, the newspapers would say, 'the learned counsel's remark provoked general laughter.'"

He rewarded her ready wit with an approving smile.

"If, then," she continued, "women can be sold, why not children? I should like to buy this child."

Seth looked frowningly at the lady, but all her attention being bestowed on the Duchess, she did not observe this evidence of his displeasure. The frown, however, was met by another and a sterner from the gentleman, who thus stood forward as the lady's champion. Seth did not lower his eyes, and the assumption of superiority in the gentleman's demeanour brought an expression of contempt and defiance into his own. It was not likely, after the fixed gaze with which they regarded each other, that either would forget the other's face. Seth observed more than the face of the man who confronted him. Every detail of dress, bearing, and manner photographed itself upon his mind, and an instinctive dislike for the fine gentleman took possession of him.

"Did you hear what I said?" cried

the lady, addressing the gentleman, and smoothing the silky hair of the Duchess. "I should like to buy this child? What has the law to say to the bargain?"

"I am afraid that the law would not support you," said the gentleman.

"I am sure that nature would not," said Seth sternly.

"Why, my good man, you have confessed that you are not the child's father."

"Confessed, did I? Well, if you will have it so. But between me and this child there is a bond of love—a strong point. And even if the law did support you, I have nine other strong points in my favour—all expressed in one small word."

"Will it be troubling you too much," asked the gentleman, with irritating insolence, "to ask you to name that word?"

"Not at all. As a lawyer—as I under-

stand from this lady's remarks you are—you will appreciate its worth. Possession."

The discordant chord between these men had been struck very effectually.

"You are acquainted with the law," observed the gentleman, implying what it was impossible to misunderstand—to wit, that Seth Dumbrick was acquainted with the law in a way not creditable to himself.

"I know nothing of it from experience."

"Yet you know something of the machinery."

"From observation and general reading."

"Indeed! You set up for a scholar!"

"I do not."

"Would possession hold good," inquired the lady, with careless condescension, "against a rightful owner?"

"It has," replied Seth, not unwilling

to use the arrow placed in his hands, "in many instances — thanks to the law."

The lady looked at the gentleman for information.

"Such things have been," he said, "but not where flesh and blood are concerned."

"And here it *is* concerned," she exclaimed, with vivacity.

"Nonsense. What whim of yours shall I have to fight against next?"

"Of course, when I say I would like to buy the child, I am aware I am talking nonsense; but perhaps it is not in your legal mind to make allowances. I am singularly curious to learn what I can of the pretty creature's history—if she has one."

"The commonest of us has a history worth reading — but not, I doubt, until the actor begins to play a conscious part in the drama of life."

"Now you are speaking in a way I like. Let me, then, have my way, and ask the gipsy to tell the child's fortune."

"Come," he said to the gipsy, "earn your money. We have already lingered too long."

Seth Dumbrick, who had been listening with impatience to this dialogue, stepped between the gipsy and the Duchess.

"We have had enough fooling," he said sternly. "Let the woman earn her money in some other way than this."

He would have retired with the children at once, had not the gentleman stepped quickly before him, barring his progress.

"You are disposed to be insolent," he said, with a slight quivering of the lips. "Do you not know how to pay respect to a lady?"

"I know what is due to myself," replied Seth quietly. "I simply wish not to be molested."

"You are a stranger about here?"

"I am here by chance; I have no knowledge of the place."

"Nor of me?"

"Nor of you—and," he added, his temper mastering his judgment, "I wish to have none. You are a gentleman, and I——"

"Am not."

"You have answered for me. I see no reason to repine at the difference in our positions."

Seth did not intend his meaning to be mistaken, and his tone added force to his words. The gentleman's manner was so overbearing, that the commoner man's independent spirit was roused.

"I am the master of this place. This is a private road; you have committed a trespass."

"Then the sooner I repair an error unintentionally committed, the better for myself. If I had known this road was private I should not have entered it."

"The notice-board is large, and the words plain. You have been good enough to inform me that you can read."

He pointed to a board at the beginning of the road which had escaped Seth's notice, on which was painted in bold letters, "Trespassers will be prosecuted." Seth bit his lip as he saw the trap into which he had fallen.

"The hedge which protects the road," continued the gentleman, "has been newly broken."

"Not by me," said Seth, somewhat uneasy for the children's sake.

"It is not to be expected that you would admit it. But for your insolence towards the lady and myself, I should be disposed to overlook the trespass; as it is I am in doubt. Where do you come from?"

"From London."

"A London tramp—a vagrant."

"No tramp or vagrant," said Seth indignantly; "an honest man bringing his

children into the country in search of health."

"I understand they are not your children."

"They are mine by adoption."

"Are their parents living?"

"This child's mother—don't be frightened, Sally—lives in the country, and is unable to offer her a home. So I take care of her."

"A modern Quixote," said the gentleman, with a sneer. "And this child"—once more he looked at the Duchess, whose eyes were raised to his—"and this child——" The imploring gaze of the Duchess appeared to disconcert him, and the sentence remained unfinished.

A singular silence followed, during which they all looked at the gentleman, whose self-possession had suddenly deserted him. Aroused to the fact that general attention was fixed upon him, he broke the silence, with curious pauses between his words.

"I was asking whether these children are sisters?"

"They are not," replied Seth.

"In any way related?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"Are her parents living?"

For the second time during the interview a falsehood rested on Seth's lips, and for the second time he refused to utter it.

"I do not know," he replied.

"What is it you say?"

"I do not know whether her parents are living."

"A born lady," muttered the gipsy, seeing her chance; "a born lady—fit to be a Duchess—*is* one, or I can't read the stars."

Seth turned a startled look upon the gipsy, saying, "You are a clever witch, wherever you have got your information." Then to the gentleman, "Have you anything more to ask me?"

"Nothing," was the reply, with a con-

tradiction almost in the same breath: "In what part of London did you say you live?" as though the question had been already asked and answered.

"In the east."

"And you rest to-night?"

"At The World's End, hard by here."

"Very well; I shall call upon you to-morrow early. You can go."

But early the next morning, before ordinary folks were stirring, Seth and the children were again on the road. The wagon started at six o'clock, and Seth experienced a feeling of relief when he caught the last glimpse of Springfield.

"No more ladies and gentlemen for us," he said almost gaily, with the air of a man who has escaped a great danger; "we have had enough of them."

"I like ladies and gentlemen," said the Duchess—a remark which drove Seth into a moody fit for at least an hour.

CHAPTER XIX.

WHAT YOU DON'T GET IS PROFIT.

The second day's journey was as delightful as the first. The weather continued fine, and Seth Dumbrick, recovering his spirits, did his best to entertain the children, to whom the ride itself would have been a sufficiently satisfying enjoyment. During the day Seth confided his plans to the good-natured wagoner, and his desire to obtain cheap lodgings for a few days for himself and the children at some modest cottage in the country.

"Would near the seaside suit you?" asked the wagoner.

"Nothing could be better," replied Seth; "but your place lies inland."

"I have time to go a little out of my way, and will take you to a cottage near the sea belonging to a friend of mine, who'll be able to lodge you reasonable."

"Nothing could be better," said Seth thankfully.

"It's obliging her and you, and won't trouble me much. Come up, Daisy! Now then, Cornflower! Four mile more for you, and plenty of time to do it in."

If Daisy and Cornflower understood that an additional task was imposed upon them they did not take it sadly, but shook their bells briskly and trotted out of their regular track with a willing spirit.

"Round this bend," said the wagoner, "and a fine stretch of the sea'll be before us."

It appeared almost incredible; for the trees and hedges in the path they were riding along were so thick and the path itself so winding as to obscure the view.

"The children have never seen the sea," said Seth.

"You don't say so! Well, I wouldn't be a Londoner, bound to live there all my days, for the best fifty houses you could offer me. And never seen a ship sailing, I'll be bound!"

"Never."

"It will be something for them to remember then. Now, shut your eyes, my little lasses, and don't open them till I say 'Presto!'"

Sally and the Duchess shut their eyes tight, their hearts throbbing with eager expectation.

"Up then, Daisy! Up, Cornflower! Round the bend we go. Presto!"

The Duchess and Sally opened their eyes and uttered exclamations of delight. The glorious sea lay before them, with large ships in the distance and fishing-boats in the foreground. In one part the sun, playing on the water, transformed it into an

island of flashing jewels. It was a veritable wonderland to the children—a dream of beauty never to be forgotten.

"Do I see the waves creeping up, Sally?" asked Seth gaily.

Sally raised her face to his and kissed him.

"It's all through that money that was sent to the Duchess, Daddy."

"All through that, Sally."

"Then I love money, Daddy," said Sally; "and I'd like to be a lady, so that the Duchess and me might live always by the sea. How far does it stretch? More than we can see?"

"Thousands and thousands and thousands of miles more. Away into other countries, where it's night at the present moment while it's daylight here."

"I don't understand it," said Sally, with a sigh of ecstasy, "and I don't want to. Oh, we're going away from it!"

"We're going to the cottage I spoke of, my little woman," said the wagoner; "it's

not three hundred yards off—just down this lane."

Down the lane they drove, and drew up at a small house with a garden before and behind. The front of the cottage was covered with ivy, and the windows in their framework of glossy leaves looked wonderfully pretty.

"This is nice, too," said Sally, disposed to enjoy everything.

"There's beauty everywhere, Sally," said Seth, with a touch of his old philosophy, "if we'll only look out for it."

"This comes without looking out for it," replied Sally; "and that's why I like it. Ain't it better than anything ever was, Duchess?"

The Duchess nodded an assent, and in another moment the whole party were in the little parlour, and Seth and the wagoner were talking to the mistress of the house. The bargain was soon struck, the terms asked for board and lodging being much less

than Seth had ventured to hope they would be. They were to have the two rooms on the first floor for sleeping apartments, one looking over the front the other over the back of the house.

"Daddy must have this," said Sally, as they stood in the front room; "it's the best."

"That's the reason why you and the Duchess shall sleep in it. I came into the country for your sakes, children, not for my own."

Everything in the place was sweet and fresh; and the garden at the back of the house contained apple- and pear-trees and currant-bushes, as well as flowers.

"My good man," said the mistress, "will be glad to have two such pretty children in the house for a little while. We've none of our own. It'll brighten us up a bit."

The woman was sad-looking and spoke in a sad tone; and Sally wondered how it was possible that one who lived in the fairy-house, with flowers and fruit trees and the

sea within a stone's throw of them, should need brightening up. She was sure if such a paradise were hers that there would never be a dull hour in it. While the woman was attending to the children upstairs, assisting them to wash after their long day's ride, and showing them all the wonders of the fairy house, Seth and the wagoner had a conversation in the room below. It was a friendly one, resulting from the wagoner's refusal to accept payment for the ride.

"It'll be a pleasure to me," said the wagoner, "not to take the money. I don't want it, having enough and to spare, as I've already told you. I don't mean to say I do it for your sake——"

"Not likely," said Seth good-humouredly.

"—But for the sake of the pretty little one you call the Duchess. And that's puzzled me. I'd take it as a favour if you'd tell me, why Duchess?"

"Well, it was a fancy of Sally's," said Seth, "who worships the Duchess——"

"It's plain enough that she thinks a mighty deal more of her than she does of herself."

"That she does. Well, the Duchess came to me in a strange way that'll take too long to explain here. The child was left in our neighbourhood in a most mysterious manner—brought in mysteriously, deserted mysteriously. She and Sally were thrown together, and Sally adopted her, if one helpless mite can be said to adopt another helpless mite. Sally's mother fell into misfortune, and the children happened to drop in my way. Sally had a name—the other one didn't—and one night we had a curious little party of children in my cellar——"

"In your cellar!"

"I live in a cellar in Rosemary Lane—and Sally, quite seriously, put the fancy in my head of calling the child the Duchess of our quarter. All the neighbours take to it kindly, and every one that knows her loves her. Look there. Who could help being attracted to her?"

The wagoner looked up at the window of the children's room, and saw the Duchess standing within a framework of dark-green ivy leaves. The light was shining full upon her beautiful face, and touched, also, the darker face of Sally, who stood at the back of the Duchess, looking over her shoulder.

"It's a picture one don't often see," said the wagoner, with a thoughtful air; "but if I had my choice of the two girls for a daughter, I reckon I'd choose the dark-skinned one."

It did not displease Seth to hear this, for Sally and the Duchess really occupied an equal place in his heart. If the beauty of the Duchess awoke the tenderness of his nature, the devotion, unselfishness, and many rare qualities displayed by Sally were no less powerful in their effect upon his sympathies. Bearing in mind the scene that had occurred at Springfield on the preceding evening, he asked the wagoner,

if any inquiries were made of him, not to divulge where he and the children were rusticating.

"I've brought them into the country," he said, "as much for peace and quietness as for fresh air."

There was to the wagoner's mind something suspicious both in the words and the nervous manner in which Seth made the request. He showed in his countenance the impression he received, and Seth, wishing to stand well with him, gave an account of the incident which had so disturbed him.

"When I heard the lady say she would like to buy my child," he said, in conclusion, "it seemed to me that she had so much faith in the power of money, and so little in the power of love, that I could not keep my temper. I spoke hotly, and with reason, I think."

"It would have roused my blood," responded the wagoner; "you never saw any of the gentlefolk before."

"Never, and I never wish to see them again. I said as much to the master of Springfield, if I'm not mistaken."

"From what I've heard of him, he's not a man either to forget or forgive."

"You'll promise me, then, for the sake of the children, not to set any one on our track."

He spoke anxiously, his fears exaggerating a danger which in all likelihood was wholly imaginary.

"Yes," replied the wagoner, "there's no harm in promising. They've no right to worry you, as far as I can see, and they sha'n't get me to put them in the way of it. How long are you going to stop here?"

"We can live here so cheaply," said Seth, with a lightened heart, "that my purse will hold out for two or three weeks; we'll stay that time, I dare say."

"I'll be going up to London about then, mayhap," said the wagoner; "if so, I'll be glad to give the little lasses a lift; and mayhap I may be passing this way in

a few days with the wagon. A ride through the lanes will do them no harm."

Seth expressed his thanks to the kind-hearted old fellow, and they shook hands and parted, the wagoner smiling good-bye to the children, who stood at the window watching him until he was out of sight.

Then commenced a happy time. The children were in a new world, and the little cottage, with its bit of garden back and front, was a very heaven to them. Everything was so new and bright, the air was so sweet, the trees and flowers so beautiful, that Sally could scarcely believe it was all real. On the first night, when they were abed, listening to the strange sound of the waves beating on the shore, Sally whispered to the Duchess,

"Isn't it lovely, Duchess?"

"Yes, oh, yes," sighed the Duchess; and this precise form of words was used at least a dozen times, each time with the belief that it embodied an observation of

an especially original nature. Once Sally, creeping out of bed, drew aside the snowy-white curtains from the window, and looked out.

"Oh, come, Duchess! come!" she cried, and the Duchess scrambled after her. It was full moon, and the glorious light shining on the trees and hedges was a vision of beauty to them.

"That's a different moon from the one we've got in Rosemary Lane," said Sally; "I wish we could take it back with us."

"Are we going back?" asked the Duchess regretfully.

Sally did not reply. The prospect was too distressing. But she was happily so constituted as to be grateful for present joys and pleasures, and she dismissed Rosemary Lane from her thoughts. Her one fear was that she would wake up.

"Do you like the noise the sea makes?" she inquires of her idol, when they were in bed again.

"It's beautiful," said the Duchess. "Are the ships there?"

Sally never hesitated to impart information on subjects of which she was ignorant.

"They're there," she said, "but they don't move till daylight comes."

"I'm sleepy," said the Duchess, with a yawn.

"I'm frightened to go to sleep," said Sally, battling with fatigue; "I want to be like this always. I hope it ain't a dream—oh, I hope it ain't a dream!"

Before she had finished, the Duchess was asleep.

"I'll pinch myself hard," thought Sally, "as hard as I can, and if there's a black-and-blue mark on my arm to-morrow morning, I shall know it's real."

Sally did pinch herself—so hard that she could not help crying out with the pain, but she obtained her reward on the following morning, when she saw the black-and-

blue marks. The joy of the day, however, was so great that as she sat on the pebbly beach, watching the waves creep up and the ships and fishing-boats floating away into wonderland, she found it hard to convince herself that she was not dreaming. At the end of the week she said to Seth,

"Daddy, every night I go to bed, I am frightened that I shall wake up and find myself in Rosemary Lane."

Thereupon he read her and the Duchess a lecture on contentment and gratitude, not so much needed by Sally as by the Duchess.

"I know you're right," said Sally; "it will always be a pleasure to think of, but I shall be awful sorry, too, that it didn't last for ever. It can't, Daddy, can it?"

"No, my dear, it can't."

"I wish I was rich," sighed Sally.

"Supposing you had lived a hundred years ago," suggested Seth, with grave humour; and paused.

"Well, Daddy. Supposing I did?"

"It would be all the same to you whether you had a hundred boxes full of gold or whether you had twopence-halfpenny."

Sally was shrewd enough to understand this without having to ask for an explanation.

"What do you say to it all?" asked Sally of the Duchess.

"I don't care for a hundred years ago," said the Duchess; "I don't know what it means. I care for Now." And she echoed Sally's words, "I wish I was rich."

This set Seth pondering, and in his endeavour to extract honey out of unpromising material and to improve the occasion, it is to be feared that he soared above the understanding of his children. In this way:

"Did I ever tell you, Sally"—he always appealed to Sally at such times, although he addressed both her and the Duchess—"of a man I once knew call Billy Spike?"

"No, Daddy."

"He was a friend of mine a good many

years ago. Older than me by thirty years was Billy Spike—and he was always Billy, and never William, to the day of his death. Nearly everybody who knew him thought he was crazy."

"Why?"

"Because of one thing he was never tired of saying, 'What I don't get is profit.' That's what sweetened the world for Billy Spike. 'What I don't get is profit.' was always on his lips."

"Was *he* a rich man, Daddy?"

"I doubt if Billy Spike ever had twenty shillings in his pocket at one time. I doubt if ever he had a new suit of clothes to his back. I doubt if he ever had quite as much to eat as he could have taken in. He was as poor as a church-mouse."

"Why is a church-mouse poor?" asked practical Sally, who dearly loved to hear Seth Dumbrick speak in this way, although, as has been said, he occasionally soared above her understanding.

"It's no use my trying to explain that, Sally. It's a saying, and a true one I dare say. But about Billy Spike. He was the poorest and the happiest man in the world, and all the philosophy of life—no, don't ask what *that* is, Sally; it's another of the things that would take too long to explain —all the philosophy of life was contained in his saying, 'What I don't get is profit.' 'Billy,' I said to him, 'what do you mean by it?' I doubt if there were many others besides me as he'd have answered, but he liked me a bit, saying I took after him in some things. 'Billy,' I said, 'what do you mean by it?' He looked at me with his eyes twinkling—they always *were* twinkling, and it wasn't often he didn't have a smile on his lips. 'Seth Dumbrick,' said he, 'you're a man of sense'—you won't mind my telling you exactly what he said, Sally?" asked Seth, suddenly attacked by a fit of modesty.

"Oh, no, Daddy; I like to hear it. And Billy Spike was right. You are."

"Thank you, Sally. Well, to go on. 'You're a man of sense,' said Billy. 'Look at me. Here I am.' And he stood up straight before me, showing large holes in his coat under his arms, and being generally a picture of rags. 'If,' said I, 'all the profit you make comes from what you've got, and not from what you haven't got, your returns must be small.' 'I've got a pair of arms, Seth Dumbrick,' said Billy. 'Thank you for nothing,' said I. 'You call that nothing!' cried Billy. 'Wait a bit. My limbs are all sound, my eyesight's good. I never had a headache or a toothache in my life, and I sleep like a top. Now, tell me who's that crossing the road?' It was a sailor we knew who hopped through life on a wooden leg. Me and Billy and the wooden-legged sailor went and had a glass together, and Billy drew the sailor out to tell us all about the miseries of having only

one leg—what shootings he had in the one that was chopped off—yes, he said that, Sally, though it does sound funny—and how he couldn't walk where he wanted to walk, and couldn't do what he wanted to do, all through having a wooden leg. It was plain enough that his wooden leg made him real unhappy and miserable. When he was gone Billy Spike said to me, with a wink, 'What I don't get is profit: I don't get wooden legs.' Just then we saw a woman that we knew; her face was twice its proper size, and she had a bandage round it. 'What's the matter, mother?' asked Billy Spike. 'I'm almost dead with the pain, Billy,' she said. 'I've been and had two of my teeth out at the hospital, and the doctor's almost broke my jaw. It's enough to drive a poor woman mad.' 'The toothache is,' said Billy. 'Yes, the toothache,' said she; 'I've had it on and off for the last twenty years, and I'm pretty well crazed with it.' Billy Spike winked at me again. 'What I don't

get is profit. I don't get toothaches.' Then we came across a blind man, and Billy drew *him* out, and a pretty bad case it was. 'I'd sooner be dead than alive,' said he. He couldn't see the wink that Billy gave. 'What I don't get is profit,' said Billy. 'I don't get blind.' And so Billy would have gone on all the day, I don't doubt, if I hadn't already caught his meaning."

In which respect Seth had the advantage of those to whom he was relating, as a possibly useful lesson, this story of Billy Spike's philosophy. Sally's face denoted that she did not see the application, and the Duchess said again, "I wish I was rich." So Seth resolved to throw aside philosophy as not suitable for the occasion, and to devote himself entirely to pleasure. It was none the less sweet because it was taken in a modest humble way, and because it cost but little money. Country walks, rides in carts and wagons, generally given for nothing—for the beauty of the Duchess

soon attracted admirers even in this out-of the-way spot—frolics in hayfields, rambles by the sea-side, fully occupied their hours, and did not afford opportunity for a moment's weariness. And one day a travelling photographer passed their road and offered to 'take" the Duchess for a song, as the saying is. Being an artist he saw the value of Seth's suggestion that she should be taken standing in the framework of ivy leaves, and the prettiest of pictures was produced. The photographer, falling in love with his work, and seeing future profit in it, took negatives of the Duchess in various attitudes, she falling into them so naturally as to excite his wonder and admiration. In truth it was a task which pleased and delighted her. Seth, shrewd as he always was, and careful of his pocket as he was compelled to be, made a good bargain with the artist, and for a very small sum obtained copies of all their portraits: the Duchess in three different positions, Sally in one, Sally and the

Duchess together, and lastly, himself with the children on either side of him. The day following this excitement another pleasure came. The old wagoner who had driven them from London arrived early in the morning with Daisy and Cornflower, and after giving them the most beautiful ride in their holiday, took them to his own cottage where he had lived from boyhood. There his old wife awaited them, and feasted the party to their hearts' content, and a peaceful ride back in the peaceful night was a fitting ending to the happy day. So the time passed until one morning Seth said to Sally,

"Home to-morrow, Sally."

She sighed with grateful regret.

"Our little girl is better than ever she was," he continued, with a fond look at the Duchess, "and we'll endeavour to keep her so. Such roses as these"—caressing the Duchess's cheek—"will be something for the Rosemary Lane folk to stare at. They've

never seen such bright ones before. We've had a happy time, haven't we?"

"Yes, yes," they both replied, nestling to him.

"Let us be thankful, then——"

"For what we haven't had?" asked Sally, with a sly look.

"No," he said with a laugh, "for what we have enjoyed;" adding in a graver tone, "I never thought the world was so good as it is."

On the second evening from this they returned to Rosemary Lane, and were received with smiles and hearty welcome by all.

CHAPTER XX.

FROM CHILDHOOD TO WOMANHOOD.

THERE is no person in life so low as not to have enemies and rivals. Every man, whatever his position, is certain to be in somebody else's way: in love, whether it be in the cottage or the palace; in ambition, whether its aim be base or noble; in business, whether it be carried on within plate-glass windows or on a costermonger's barrow. The observation holds good with respect to Seth Dumbrick. A rival cobbler in Rosemary Lane had taken advantage of his absence to steal a march upon him and his connection. The rival was a married man, with a dozen children dependent upon him for support, and therefore, on family

grounds, his claims upon public sympathy and support were stronger than those of Seth Dumbrick. Other circumstances, from the force of contrast, were in his favour at this juncture of affairs. He was not a conversational man, was not a pleasant man, and possessed no striking personal merit which might recommend him. But, on the other hand, Seth Dumbrick bore the reputation of being silent and reserved, and he was not companionable, a quality—or the lack of one—which showed that he set himself above his neighbours. He was very nearly reaping the reward of his pride, for upon his return from the country, although he and his friends were received with smiles, he found that many of his customers had gone over to his rival. Seth could ill afford this, but he was too high-minded to show any sign of discontent.

At this crisis, Sally directly, and the Duchess indirectly, proved of real service to him in a business way. Sally, brimming

over with delightful memories of the happy days passed in the cottage by the sea, was not slow to communicate her experiences to her young friends and playmates in Rosemary Lane. The wonderful stories she had to tell, and the wonderful way in which she related them, caused the children's eyes to dilate and their breasts to throb. Sally was an artist, and, in a more effective manner than would have been adopted by a more polished narrator, she painted her pictures in exactly those colours which made them alluring to an audience not over-gifted with learning and intelligence. In all these pictures, the Duchess was the central figure. She was the princess for whom the flowers bloomed and the sea whispered musically. The happy rides, the pleasant meals, the delicious idling, the soft murmurs of woodland life, were all for the Duchess, and, but for her, would not have been. Sally's tongue was never idle when there was an opportunity to glorify her idol, and

the devoted child had never been so rich in opportunity as at the present time. Among other stories related by her, was, of course, the story of the Duchess's portrait being taken, surrounded by flowers, which Sally declared was "out and out the most beautiful thing as ever was seen;" and public curiosity being excited, Seth Dumbrick was besieged by applicants eager to see the pictures. These visits were the means of bringing back his truant customers; and made wise by experience and responsibility —this latter a rare incentive to acts of wisdom—he succeeded in ingratiating himself into the more favourable opinion of his neighbours, who said to one another that Seth Dumbrick was becoming quite an agreeable man. Even to Mrs. Preedy he was gracious, and for fully three weeks that inveterate gossip had not a word to say to his disparagement.

So, being once more settled down quietly in his stall, with sufficient work for the

hours, Seth hammered and patched away from morning till night, and but for certain fears connected with the Duchess, would have been a perfectly happy man. One of these fears related to the fortune-telling incident; he was unreasonably apprehensive that by some means or other the Duchess would be tracked and spirited away by the gentleman with whom he had had high words at Springfield; he did not stop to reason upon the motive which would lead to such an act. But as time wore on, and nothing new transpired, this fear became weaker, and rarely intruded itself. His other fear related to the bank-note, so strangely forwarded to the Duchess, which had paid for their holiday. If he had known where to seek for a clue to the discovery of the sender of the money, it is doubtful whether he would have availed himself of it; his earnest wish was that the matter should rest where it was, and that he and the Duchess and Sally should be

allowed to live their quiet, uneventful life unmolested. If he saw the postman coming along the street, he watched his progress nervously, dreading that another letter for the Duchess might arrive, and when the man passed without look or word, the cheerful hammering upon the leather, or the more vigorous plying of the awl, denoted how greatly he was relieved.

Weeks and months passing in this way brought repose to his mind, and he sometimes smiled at himself for the uneasy fancies, born of love and fear, which had so tormented him. His love for the Duchess increased with time; she was for ever in his thoughts; over his bed, in a frame and protected by a glass, hung her picture, which was to him as beautiful as the most beautiful Madonna in the eyes of a devout woman; there was not speck or flaw on her, materially or spiritually; she was the queen of his life and household. Would the Duchess like this? Would the Duchess

like that? What can we do for her? How can we serve her?—everything was done by Seth and Sally that could contribute to the easy and pleasant passing of her days. Their old clothes were darned and patched, and darned and patched again and again, so that the Duchess migh have pretty things to wear. They were continually buying flowers and bits of ribbons for her, and casting about for ways and means to bring new pleasures into her days. In this way twelve months passed, and the summer came round again. Sitting at their midday meal, Sally remarked that this time last year they were going into the country. Seth referred to a small memorandum book, the recipient of a singular medley of notes and observations.

"To-morrow morning's exactly a year," he said, "since we started."

Sally sighed, and Seth saw with pain a look of regret in the Duchess's eyes. It was not a calm regret; there was no-

thing of resignation in it. It expressed a struggle to be free from the thraldom of poverty, a rebellious repining at the hardship of Fate. As Seth was considering whether any ingenious twisting of Billy Spike's philosophy would afford consolation, a double knock at the stall above was heard. He mounted the steps, and confronted the postman.

"A letter for the Duchess of Rosemary Lane."

Seth received it with a sinking heart, and putting it hastily into his pocket, descended to the living-room.

"Who was it, Daddy?" asked Sally.

"Mrs. Simpson sent for the child's boot," replied Seth, with a guilty palpitation; "it ain't done yet."

He finished his dinner in silence, listening to reminiscences of last year's delightful holiday, called up by Sally and the Duchess. He did not take the letter from his pocket until late in the night, when he was alone.

He gazed at it for a few moments, believing it contained a realisation of his fears, and that it might be the means of parting him and the Duchess. If he had not been a just man, he would have destroyed the letter, but he was restrained by the reflection that it might be of importance to the future of the child he loved. "And to hurt or injure in any way," he thought, "a child that you love, Seth Dumbrick, is not the work of a man or a loving heart." Still it was with reluctant fingers that he unfastened the envelope, and found in it a bank-note for five pounds. As with the letter received last year, it did not contain a single word that would furnish a clue. He had carefully preserved the first envelope, and comparing the writing on the two, he judged it to be from one hand.

"It's like a Chinese puzzle," he muttered. "Worse; for I've got to do it without any pieces, except these," turning

over the envelopes. "But do it I will, if I can."

He resolved to keep the matter secret, and not to mention it to a soul—certainly not to the Duchess, whom it most concerned; and not even to Sally.

"Who is it that sends the money?" he mused. "A man or a woman? That's the first point. There's a difference in handwriting, I've heard. I must find a way to make sure of that. I suppose the note's as good as the one sent last year."

Before the afternoon of the following day, he had thought over a lame little scheme, which he put into execution without delay. He walked to the shop of a tradesman, of whom he was in the habit of buying tools and leather, and having made some small purchases, he offered the note in payment. It was taken, and change given, without remark.

"Is your wife at home?" then asked Seth.

"Yes," replied the tradesman, with an inquiring look, for relations between the him and Seth were purely of a business nature.

"I'd like to see her," said Seth; "I want to ask her about something that a woman knows better than a man."

The tradesman called his wife, and Seth had a quiet talk with her. He commenced in a roundabout way.

"It's about a friend of mine," he said, "an unmarried man like myself, but more likely to marry, being younger. He's received a letter without a signature, and he's mighty anxious to find out whether it comes from a man or a woman. It's a delicate matter, you see."

The tradesman's wife did not see, but she waited patiently for further light.

"The fact is," continued Seth, growing hot, for he he felt that he was getting entangled, "there's a girl he knows and has a fancy for, that another man knows and has a fancy for."

"It's a love letter, then," interrupted the tradesman's wife, with a smile.

"Yes," said Seth, gladly accepting the suggestion, "and he naturally wishes to know who wrote it."

"Yes?"

"Now the first thing to discover is whether it's a man's or a woman's writing."

"How can I help you to discover that?"

"If you will be good enough to write just a couple of words—say, Rosemary Lane—on a bit of paper, it might assist us."

The woman wrote down the words, and wrote them without a curve; every letter had in it as many angles as it could conveniently accommodate. After this, Seth asked the woman if her daughters would write the same words on separate pieces of paper, and then he obtained a specimen of writing from the tradesman himself. He paid visits to many places that after-

noon, with the same purpose in view, and by the evening he had in his pocket between twenty and thirty different specimens of caligraphy. When the children were asleep he continued his examination, and discovered that, without an exception, all the women wrote in angles and all the men in curves. Comparing the writing with that on the envelopes, he came to the conclusion that the addresses were written and the money sent by a woman.

He derived an odd kind of satisfaction from this result. There was less danger to be feared from a woman than from a man, and, without difficulty, Seth invented a dozen different sets of circumstances to fit the case, in all of which the woman who was in this way kind to the Duchess was never to make herself known. But so as not to miss a chance, he more than ever determined to keep the matter locked up in his own breast. The money, however, clearly belonged to the Duchess; had

it been intended for his benefit, it would have been sent direct to him. It would be an unworthy action, therefore, to divert it from its proper use, and the conscientious man decided that it must be spent on the Duchess, and on the Duchess alone. The child had had her ears pierced, and wore in them a pair of rough glass earrings bought by Sally for a few pence on the anniversary of her idol's birthday. No one knew how old the Duchess exactly was, or on what day she was born; but a birthday was such a happy occasion for love-gifts, and the Duchess so fit a person to give them to, that a natal day was fixed for her. Of course a suitable one. "March winds and April showers bring forth May flowers." Sally knew the rhyme, and settled that the Duchess was born when the flowers were born, on the 1st of May. On the Duchess's last birthday Sally had presented the glass earrings, and the pleasure derived from the giving and the receiving was as

great as if the bits of glass had been diamonds. The Duchess never tired of admiring herself in the little tin-framed mirror fixed by the side of the bed, and shook her head to make the crystals sparkle, and played at hide and peep with them, hiding them in her hair and shaking them free again. A fair meed of admiration was also passed upon them by her playmates, and the Duchess thought them the loveliest things in the world until one unhappy day she heard an ill-natured woman call them "bits of trumpery glass." From that moment they became less precious in the Duchess's eyes, and a secret longing crept into her mind for something more valuable to show off her pretty ears. About this time Mrs. Preedy, having occasion to go westward, invited the Duchess to accompany her, to see the carriages and fine folks in the Park. Without asking for permission from her guardian, the Duchess accepted the invitation joyfully, and

as she walked along by the side of Mrs. Preedy, her quick eye took in everything of note that passed her; but most of all did she notice the gold ornaments worn by the ladies, and yearned for them in her heart of hearts.

"Such heaps of rich people, Duchess," observed Mrs. Preedy. "It's like a show."

"Do you wish you were rich?" she inquired of Mrs. Preedy.

"Ay, that I do," replied Mrs. Preedy; "I don't know what I wouldn't do to be rich."

It was but the expression of a long experience in the poor and pinched byways of life, and Mrs. Preedy did not attach any special meaning to her words.

"There's nothing in the world like it, is there?" inquired the Duchess. "There's nothing in the world like being rich."

"No, that there's not," replied the woman heartily.

"Why," presently continued the

Duchess, "are some people rich and other people poor?"

"Oh, *I* don't know," said Mrs. Preedy peevishly; "it's all in the way we're born. Ladies and gentlemen ain't born in Rosemary Lane."

"I wasn't born in Rosemary Lane," mused the Duchess, in a tone which was in itself an assertion of superiority over her companion.

"Do you know where you *was* born?" asked Mrs. Preedy.

"No," was the reply, "but not in Rosemary Lane."

"What *do* you remember before you came to Rosemary Lane," continued Mrs. Preedy, growing interested in the conversation.

"I don't remember coming to Rosemary Lane," said the Duchess; "I had a mamma once."

"Where?"

"I don't know; in a garden, I think."

"Like anybody you see?"

"Like her," said the Duchess, pointing to a lady who was stepping from a carriage. In the lady's face dwelt an expression of much sadness and sweetness, which seemed to be the natural outcome of a sad and sweet nature. The Duchess's observance of the lady drew her attention to the child, and she stopped and spoke, and asked Mrs. Preedy if the pretty creature was her daughter.

"No, indeed, ma'am," said Mrs. Preedy, with a curtsey; "she has no mother, poor dear, and she was just saying that you were like her mamma."

"Her mamma!" exclaimed the lady, with a look of surprise; "where do you come from, then?"

"From Rosemary Lane, if you please," said the obsequious Mrs. Preedy, who was always deferential to those above her.

"And where may that be!"

"In the east, if you please," with

another curtsey, which indicated that if the lady pleased she could place Rosemary Lane in east, west, north, or south, and nobody would dispute it.

The lady, with languid humour, suggested "Jerusalem?" and then asked the Duchess if she would like a cake. They were standing in front of a confectioner's shop, and the child, with as much self-possession (as Mrs. Preedy afterwards remarked when she related the adventure) as if she had been a born lady, withdrew her hand from Mrs. Preedy, and held it out to the lady, who smilingly led her into the shop, and feasted her and Mrs. Preedy to their hearts' content. They had cakes and jellies, and strawberries and cream, and the lady chatted with the Duchess, and praised her beauty, in the most gracious and affable manner. Altogether, it was a very pleasant time, and formed quite an event in Mrs. Preedy's life, who for months and months gave most vivid descriptions of the entertainment,

never forgetting to state that when they went into the Park later in the day they met the lady driving in her carriage there, and that she bowed and smiled in recognition of them.

Subsequent to his examination into the writing on the letters addressed to the Duchess, Seth Dumbrick also went westwards in search of a present for the Duchess, to be paid for out of the money which was hers, and staring in the shop-windows, was greatly bewildered by the attractive articles there displayed. Silk sashes and neckerchiefs, natty kid boots and fascinating hats, distracted him with their claims. Had he been a well-to-do man, there is no knowing what extravagance he might have committed. At length he stationed himself before a jeweller's window, and gazed upon the beautiful articles exhibited in it, now deciding upon this, now upon that; and, in the end, upon a pair of gold earrings, tastefully designed to represent

shells. He had no idea of the value of such articles, and it was with something of trepidation he entered the shop, where his appearance was viewed with suspicion by the salesman, who saw no fitness between the unshaven chin and grimy fingers of the workman and the graceful devices in gold and silver displayed for sale. A bargain, however, was soon concluded, and Seth became possessor of the earrings on payment of half the money he held in trust for the Duchess. Then he went to a milliner's shop, where he seemed even more out of place than in the jeweller's, and for twenty shillings bought one of the prettiest hats in all the stock. Hugging his treasures closely to him, and enjoying in anticipation the delight of the Duchess, he walked home very contentedly, and artfully turned the conversation upon last year's holiday, saying, in a melancholy tone,

"No holiday this year, Duchess."

Sally shook her head mournfully.

"Can't afford it, eh, Sally? Now, what's the next best thing to the holiday we can't afford? Guess."

Sally could not guess, and indeed did not try, considering it rather cruel in their guardian to remind them so pointedly of a pleasure it was impossible to renew.

"Can't guess, eh? I thought you had a cleverer head than that. Let me try. What do you say to a present—something pretty for—who do you think?"

"For the Duchess!" cried Sally.

The Duchess looked up eagerly.

"Yes, for the Duchess. Something out of the way. Something very much out of the way, but that 'll please her and become her beyond anything. These, for instance."

He carefully untied the little packet wrapt in silver tissue-paper, carefully opened the leather case, and pointed triumphantly to the earrings nestling softly in their blue-velvet couches. Sally clapped her hands, and jumped up; the Duchess gazed on the

pretty ornaments with parted lips and eyes aglow with admiration.

"For me!" she exclaimed, almost under her breath. "For me!"

"For you, Duchess," said Seth. "What do you think of 'em?"

She threw her arms round his neck, and kissed him, with perhaps more affection than she had ever shown towards him, and then turned hastily to the earrings, in fear lest they might have vanished from the table. The glittering ornaments fitted her nature most thoroughly and completely. They seemed to say, "We are yours. You are ours. We belong to each other. You have no business to wear bits of trumpery glass. We are what you have a right to possess." There was absolute harmony between her and the pretty things, and she experienced a new and singularly entrancing pleasure in merely gazing upon them.

"Is one kiss all you will give me for them?" asked Seth.

"No, no," she replied; "I will give you a thousand thousand."

She smothered him with kisses, murmuring, "I love you for them, I love you for them."

"They are real gold," said Seth, more than satisfied with his bargain. "What will Rosemary Lane say to that?"

With trembling fingers the Duchess lifted the earrings from the case. Had they been imbued with feeling she could not have felt more tender towards them.

"May I put them in?"

"Surely, my dear; I bought them for you to wear."

The Duchess hastily unhooked Sally's birthday gift from her ears, and threw it on the table, replacing it with the more valuable and therefore more precious offering. A pang shot through Sally's breast as she witnessed the action. The bits of trumpery glass, albeit they cost but a few pence, had not been easily obtained by her;

they were the result of many weeks' saving of farthings and halfpence, and to pay for them she had put down with a strong spirit a number of small cravings. Not that the saving and scraping was not in itself a delight to her; to deny herself in order that the Duchess might be gratified was one of her sweetest pleasures. The common glass earrings were her love-gift, and she had dreamt of them long before and after they were presented; and to see them now so carelessly thrust aside brought the tears to her eyes. She brushed them instantly away. The Duchess, with a piece of broken looking-glass in her hand, was walking up and down the cellar, gazing at the reflection of the new earrings, with eyes so sparkling that they outshone the glittering baubles. As she turned this way and that, now bending forward, now leaning back, in enchanting attitudes, holding the glass so that the ornaments were always in view, a thousand graces and charms were depicted in her of

which for the time she was unconscious. Sally, despite her sorrow at the despisal of her love-gift, could not help admiring the beautiful picture, and when the Duchess came close to her, she drew her idol to her breast, and kissed her passionately.

"Don't!" said the Duchess, with a little struggle to be free; "you hurt me, Sally!"

Sally's arms relaxed, and she turned aside with quivering lips; for a moment, everything swam before her eyes, and she felt quite faint.

"And that's not all," saith Seth; "I have something else for our Duchess."

"Oh, what is it, what is it?" cried the Duchess, springing to his side.

"See," he said, holding up the hat, "what will Rosemary Lane say to this? Sally, fit it on, and let us see how our princess looks in it."

Sally kept her sobs back with a vicious pinch of her own arm which almost made

her scream, and placed the hat on the Duchess's head, to the best advantage be sure. There was no meanness in Sally's soul. She could suffer and be strong. Nothing would satisfy the Duchess that afternoon but to dress herself in her best clothes, and go out and show herself. It was done; and in her blue-merino dress, her boots made for her in the most dainty fashion by Seth's loving hands, her hat and and her gold earrings, she walked about Rosemary Lane, with Sally by her side, the envy and admiration of all beholders. In the eyes of the Rosemary Lane folk Sally was a most complete foil to the beautiful Duchess. Her hands were dirty, and her clothes had many a hole in them; but there was a soft light in her eyes, and an expression of deep, almost suffering devotion in her face, which might have attracted the attention of close observers,—and not entirely to Sally's disadvantage. The Duchess had an afternoon of rare enjoyment; even those

who envied her paid court to her, and her train included all the young radicals in Rosemary Lane who had hitherto held aloof from her, but who now, fairly conquered by the splendour of her personal adornment, fell down and worshipped. It was the story of the golden calf over again—the old story which to-day is being enacted with so much fervour by beggar and millionaire, from Whitechapel to Belgravia. Late at night, when the Duchess was asleep with her gold earrings in her ears, and her new hat hanging by the side of her bed, so that she might see it the moment she awoke in the morning, Sally, with tears in her eyes, wrapt the bits of trumpery glass in paper, and placed them carefully away. "She'll be hunting about for 'em soon," thought Sally, "and then I'll give 'em to her." But the Duchess never sought, never asked for the common love-gift; it was worthless in her eyes, being worthless in itself; she had gold earrings now, and perhaps by-and-by—who could

tell?—she would have earrings with sparkling stones in them, worth a handful of money. For in the Duchess's soul was growing, with a firm and strong growth, a most intense hankering after fine things. She would wander by herself away from Sally and Seth and Rosemary Lane into the thoroughfares frequented by ladies and gentlemen, and watch them and their dress and ways with an eager, strange, and restless spirit. She saw children beautifully dressed riding in carriages; and, yearning to be like them, would shed rebellious tears at the fate which bound her to Rosemary Lane. It is not to be supposed that she considered this matter as clearly as it is here briefly expressed; she was not yet old enough to give it clear expression; but she *felt* it; the seed of discontent was firmly implanted within her, and grew for lack of material and intellectual light. Material light Seth Dumbrick could not give the Duchess, for he lived in a cellar, and

her home was there. There is more in this than at first sight meets the mental eye. Things are not entirely bad or good in themselves, but are made so in degree from their surroundings. Good soil and light and air, are necessary for fair fruition; evil results spring from darkness and cramped-up spaces. That in the cramped-up spaces where light and sweet air are scarce, so many deeds are done which, though never placed on record, ennoble humanity—that in those spaces so many virtuous and heroic lives are passed, the mere example of which, without parade, bears fair fruit in the passing of other virtuous and heroic lives—shows how much inherent goodness there is in human nature. It is with some a fashion not to believe this—so much the more to be pitied they who hold and promulgate such a belief. If they were right, for one crime now committed, there would be a thousand, and the world would be strewn with the wrecks of lives.

Intellectual light Seth Dumbrick certainly did give the Duchess, but it was light of a kind which dazed and confused her mental vision. Until he had admitted the children into his household, Seth had led, from choice, a life of seclusion; and this disinclination to mix with his fellows, combined with his thoughtful manners, had gained for him the reputation of being something of a philosopher. But the deeper insight into men and things which comes from inward contemplation must be imbued with some quality of inspiration before it can be made to apply beneficially to the practical uses of life. Without this inspiration, the judgment becomes warped, and in its effects mischievous. The experiences of the man who mingles freely with men, who shares their pleasures and sorrows, and even their follies and foibles, are of infinitely higher value than those of a solitary liver. Such an existence narrows the sympathies, and it

narrowed Seth's. The exercise of all the better feelings of his nature was confined to the small circle which included only Sally and the Duchess, and what of good he saw outside that boundary was evoked by his love for these children of his adoption. Surrounded by these influences the Duchess grew in years. Seth bestowed upon her the fullest measure of affection, and he let her go her way. He placed no restraint upon her; he demanded no sacrifice from her. He never attended a place of worship, nor did she; he had his hard-and-fast opinions upon religious matters, which, viewed in the light (or darkness) of dogmatic belief, constituted him a materialist — an accusation which, with a proper understanding of the term, he would have indignantly denied. Thus, from month to month, and year to year, Rosemary Lane passed through a routine of daily tasks and duties, so dull as to weigh sorely and heavily upon the soul of the

Duchess. Colour was necessary to her existence, and she sought for it and obtained it in other places. Stronger and stronger grew her passion for wandering from the narrow to the wider spaces, where the life was more in harmony with her desires, and so frequently and for so long a time was she now absent, that, on one occasion when she was missing from morning till night, Seth took her to task for her truant propensities.

"Do you want me to keep always in Rosemary Lane?" she inquired, with her lovely blue eyes fixed full upon him.

"It would be best," was his reply.

"It doesn't matter to you," she said, "whether I stop at home or not; there is nothing for me to do, and I sometimes feel that—that—"

Her eyes wandered round the cellar in dull discontent, and with something of self-reproach, also, for the feeling which she strove but could not find words to express.

"Well, my dear?" said Seth, patiently waiting for an explanation.

"Only this, guardian," she rejoined, "that I must go away when I like, and that you musn't stop me. If you do"—with a little laugh which might mean anything or nothing—"I might run away altogether."

"Then there are other places," said Seth, after a short pause; he found it necessary very often when conversing with the Duchess to consider his words before he uttered them; "and other people that you love better than us."

"Other places, not other people. I don't know any other people."

"You don't love Rosemary Lane, my dear," he said wistfully.

"What is there to love in it?" she replied, evading the question. "I might love it less if I were not free to go from it when the fit seizes me——"

"But you go always alone, my dear,"

he said, with a sigh, "and I am afraid you might get into mischief."

"What mischief?" she asked, with innocent wonder in her face. "No one would hurt me. Everybody is kind to me. But as you seem to care for it, I'll take Sally with me now and then. So here's a kiss, guardian, and we'll say no more about it."

Her adoption of the term "guardian" arose out of a conversation—held but a few weeks previous to Seth's present remonstrance—in which he and Sally had related to her all they knew of her history.

In one respect Seth had faithfully performed his duty towards the Duchess. He had taught her all it was in his power to impart, and the pupil had gone beyond the master, inasmuch as she wrote a better hand and spoke purer English than he. Indeed, she was by instinct quick to avail herself of any advantage that would place

her above her contemporaries in station, and she would make sacrifices to acquire it. Time had developed in her the good, but in some natures dangerous, quality of ingenuousness, and she had not yet learnt to disguise or conceal her emotions. A better quality still, was her truthfulness; Seth had never detected her in a falsehood—far different from Sally, who indulged in them without the slightest compunction whenever they appeared to her to be necessary. Time ripened, but did not beautify Sally. Her figure was awkward and ungainly, and her limbs had not the roundness or the grace of those of the Duchess. Her face was at once too young and too old for her age; you saw in it both the innocence and simplicity of the child and the wary look of the woman of the world who knows that snares abound. Her skin was as brown as a berry, and her form appeared lank and thin, although she and the Duchess were

of the same height. Undressing one night, they stood, with bare shoulders, side by side, looking into the glass. The contrast was very striking, and both saw and felt it, the Duchess with a joyous palpitation because of her beauty, and Sally with no repining because of her lack of it. The contrast was striking even in the quality and fashion of their linen, Sally's being coarse, and brown as the skin it covered, and the Duchess's being white and fine, with delicate edgings about it.

"I don't believe," said Sally, with tender admiration, her brown arm embracing the Duchess's white shoulder, "that there's another girl in the world with such a skin, and such eyes, and altogether as pretty as you are, Duchess."

"Do you really mean it, Sally?" asked the Duchess, as though the observation were made for the first instead of the thousandth time.

"You know I do."

"I think you do," said the Duchess, showing her teeth of pearl. "But if I were to say the same of myself, you'd say I was the vainest instead of the prettiest girl that breathes."

"A girl can't help knowing she's pretty," said Sally philosophically; she had imbibed much of the spirit and some of the peculiarities of Seth's utterances, "if she *is* pretty; and can't help being glad of it. As you are, of course, Duchess."

"Yes, I *am* glad, Sally; I can't tell you how glad. I should be a miserable girl if I were like——"

She paused suddenly, with a guilty blush, being about to say, "if I were like you, Sally."

Sally smiled. "I don't doubt I should be glad if I had a skin as white, and eyes as blue, and lips as red as yours; but for all that, I don't seem to be sorry because I am ugly. For I *am* very ugly!"

She gazed at the reflection of herself in

the glass with eyes that were almost merry, and despite her self-depreciation there was something very attractive in her appearance. The grace of youth was hers, and the kindliness and unselfishness of her nature imparted a charm to her face which mere beauty of feature could not supply.

"You are not so very ugly," observed the Duchess.

"No?" questioned Sally.

"No. You are as good-looking as most of the girls in Rosemary Lane——"

"Leaving you out," interrupted Sally quickly.

"Yes," said the Duchess complacently, "leaving me out. Your teeth are not white, but they are regular, and I like your mouth, Sally"—kissing it—"though it *is* a little bit too large. Your hair isn't as silky as mine——"

"Oh, no, Duchess, how could it be?"

"But it is longer and stronger; and as for your eyes, you have no idea how they sparkle. They are full of fire."

"If a fairy was to come to me to-night," said Sally, delighted at the Duchess's praises, "and give me wishes, I don't think I would have myself changed."

"I know what I would wish for."

"What?"

"Silk dresses and furs and kid gloves and gold watches and chains and bracelets; carriages and footmen and white dogs; flowers and fans and lace pocket-handkerchiefs and——"

"Oh, my!" exclaimed Sally. "We shouldn't have room for them all. Good night. I'm so sleepy."

The Duchess dreamt that all the things she wished for were hers, and that she was a fine lady, driving in her carriage through Rosemary Lane, with all the neighbours cheering and bowing to her.

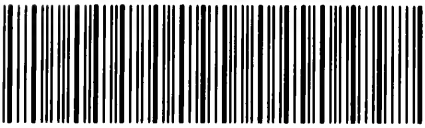
In this way, and with this kind of teaching, the Duchess grew from child to woman. And here for a time we drop the curtain. The silent years, fraught with

smiles and tears, roll on; for some the buds are blossoming; for some the leaves are falling; the young look forward to the sunny land they shall never reach; the old look back with sighs upon days made happy by regret. And midst the triumph and the anguish, the hope and fear, the joy and sorrow, Time, with passionless finger, marks the record, and pushes us gently on towards the grave.

END OF VOL. II.

PRINTED BY TAYLOR AND CO.,
LITTLE QUEEN STREET, LINCOLN'S INN FIELDS

UNIVERSITY OF ILLINOIS-URBANA



3 0112 078028344